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NORMAN SINCLAIR



NORMAN SINCLAIR

BY

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"BOTHWELL—A POEM," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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NORMAN SINCLAIR.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

PHILOSOPHERS have often disputed and men of the world debated as to the station in life which, under ordinary circumstances, is most likely to insure the happiness of a human being; but I am not aware that the controversy has resulted in any general agreement. The majority, I suspect, if some beneficent fairy gave them the option of choosing, would decide in favour of ten thousand a-year, or it may be a little more, with some hereditary title of honour corresponding to the amount of the fortune. Few would content themselves with "that thousand" which, in this country, is amply sufficient for the wants and reasonable luxuries of existence; very few, indeed, would name five hundred as their ultimatum; and none but a stray Apemantus, or a wayward cynic with strong eccentric tendencies, would restrict himself to a crust and liberty.

Let not the reader suppose that I have confounded two separate things, station and fortune. In this happy land of ours, which is becoming every year more and more weaned from aristocratic prejudice, fortune and station are as nearly as possible synonymous. Let a man have but money enough, and, unless he is a very stupid person indeed, he need not despair of working his way to the peerage, and sitting one day on the same bench with the representative of the oldest barony of England. Be his origin what it may, money will buy him a fair wife. Not in Circassia only is there a trade in such commodities. Money, in the ears of a dowryless girl, who has been hawked season after season from one watering-place to another without attracting an offer, means diamonds, a house in London, a handsome equipage, a box at the opera, independent pin-money, and other things having a close connection with the pomp and vanities of this wicked world, which few damsels so sadly situated can resist. Why blame them, if, never having known what love is—never having surrendered their hearts with maiden fear and trembling to the keeping of others—never having been beloved, or solicited, they yield to the parental solicitation, and stand, bedecked with lace and orange-flowers, before the altar, promising in the face of God and man thenceforward to obey, serve, love, honour, and keep, in sickness and in health, some vulgar millionaire of advanced age, who, in manners and learning, is decidedly inferior to the valet who serves and despises him? Is it necessary to say that, through money, a fool can get into

Parliament far more easily than the wisest man of the age, if so be that the latter is deficient in the purse? Yes, Mammon! of all the spirits that fell, thou hast the decided ascendancy in this commercial age of enlightenment. Belial is but thy subordinate, for his best votaries own superior allegiance to thee; Asmodeus, poor scoffing imp, cannot sneer thee down; and Mephistopheles is never sure of his victim without thy confirmation and assistance!

Possibly, reader, you may deem me a hypocrite when I protest that I never have been covetous of wealth, or have entertained any desire to rise above a middle station. Nevertheless, I aver upon soul and conscience—keeping in view that the knowledge of one's-self is the most difficult and deceptive of all possible sciences—that such is the case. I am, God be thanked, a sincere Christian in belief; and, so far as the weakness of humanity will allow, and praying for that grace and assistance which, if fervently implored, will not be withheld, I strive that my practice shall be in some conformity with my belief. “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me,” is a good, wise, and solemn prayer, which ought to ascend oftener than I fear it does to the eternal throne. I shall not insist now on its fitness as a means of preparation for the life which is to come. I shall take it merely as embodying a secular maxim or apothegm—which, I may remark, is the case with the sublimest of the scriptural precepts, for all that revelation teaches us to believe will contribute to eternal happiness, does,

if practised here, secure our temporal peace ; and I say, broadly and advisedly, after the experience of many years, that, in the middle station of life, a man, be his accomplishments and talents what they may, has a far better chance of happiness than if he were greatly elevated, or unduly depressed. Who would choose, if he could help it, to be an emperor or a king? Read Gibbon, and you will see what became of the infatuated creatures who, in the latter days of the Roman Empire, bought the dignity, generally to perish in the course of a year or so by the swords of a hireling band, purchased by some new and equally asinine competitor. Who envies Charles Dix, or Louis Philippe? or who can envy the present Napoleon? Can it be pleasant, when you step into your carriage bound for the opera, to reflect that the chances are two to one that, when you descend, some infernal machine will explode at your feet? Is it agreeable to know that you are marked down for assassination by a club of dare-devils in masks, who deliberately throw dice for the honour of taking you off, effecting, after the lot is cast, assurances on your life for the purpose of providing for the outcast children of the murderer? Should you like to have the responsibility of wars, undertaken for the maintenance or aggrandisement of your own dynasty, in the course of which many thousands of souls, altogether unfitted for eternity, must pass to judgment, naming you as the man who, for selfish earthly motives, had prematurely sent them to their long account without even the chance of repentance? I am no Covenanter, nor addicted to

rash application of scriptural terms ; but this I must needs say, that if Tophet is made hot for any one, it will be for the individual whose personal ambition has disturbed the peace of Europe ; and who, if evil spirits submit to an earthly incarnation, is perfect Moloch, with a Mammonistical fondness for the funds.

To be a duke is not, in my humble opinion, much more desirable. Dukes are subjected to all the inconveniences of high dignity, without that fine sensation of being irresponsible which is the sole privilege of majesty. In the olden time, very few dukes died peaceably in their beds. They either perished in foreign battle, or in civil conflict, or mounted the scaffold to lay their heads upon the block, as the penalty of their rebellion. There are no rebellions now ; and a considerable time has elapsed since any of ducal rank occupied apartments in the Tower. But for all that a duke can hardly be said to have more freedom than a prisoner on parole. Wherever he goes he is a marked man, at whom the many may stare with impunity. His every word and deed are sure to be quoted and commented on with undue severity. If he has large possessions and a fair share of patronage, he must lay his account with being pestered from morning to night by all manner of applications from the greedy, the indigent, and the unscrupulous. If he is munificent, he is accused of being extravagant. If he is economical, he is branded as penurious. Archbishop Tillotson, in a sermon preached before the Merry Monarch—doubtless with Buckingham, Rochester, Sedley, and the rest of

that respectable crew among the audience—took occasion to illustrate the advantages of a creditable example from men of lofty station. “Those,” said the excellent prelate, “who are in a low and private condition, can only shine to a few, but they that are advanced a great height above others, may, like the heavenly bodies, dispense a general light and influence, and scatter happiness and blessings among all that are below them.” To my humble thinking, it must be very cold among the stars.

But it would be impertinent, or, even worse, tedious, to pursue this topic further, more especially as I have got some sort of a story to tell; and it is against all æsthetical rule to philosophise in the preface. I merely wish to state my conviction, that a man placed in a middle station of life, and content to remain there, not only is likely to secure a larger share of temporal happiness and enjoyment, but is enabled to take a more just and unbiassed view of society than can be obtained by those who move at either extremity of the social scale. The peasant cannot comprehend the ways of the prince, nor the prince those of the peasant. The middle-man, who stands between the two, can form a right estimate of both.

I was born about the time when the star of the great Napoleon was beginning to decline. My father, a subaltern in the British army, whose hereditary portion was very small, fell at the Battle of the Pyrenees. He had been imprudent enough to contract a marriage with a young lady of good connections, but quite as

poor as himself, before joining his regiment; and I believe that the letter which was intended to convey to him the news of my birth, was on its way to Spain, when he, along with many other gallant soldiers, was struck down by the terrible fire of the French artillery. My mother, whose constitution was originally delicate, and who was deeply attached to my father, never rallied from the blow. She drooped and died within six months after she had assumed the widow's garb, leaving me a helpless infant, to the care of an old woman, who had been her own nurse, and who, like many of her class in Scotland, concentrated the whole of her strong affections upon her charge. I know not why it should be so, but it is a well-known fact that nurses are often much more passionately fond of the children committed to their rearing, than of their own kith and kin. This was the case with dear old Eppie Osett, who still lives in venerable age, the keeper of my little lodge; and faithfully and truly did she fulfil the trust imposed on her by my dying mother. Eppie was the sole link between me and my parents, and often in my boyhood have I heard her tell, with affectionate prolixity, the story of my mother's death.

"She was but poorly, the sweet lamb," would Eppie say, "before the Captain gaed awa' to thae weary wars; and weel I mind that when they parted she grat sair, and made as if she wadna let him gang, for I think she had something on her heart that telled her she wad never see him mair. A' night long I heard her sobbin' in her room, and prayin' for the brave lad that had gane

to fight his kintra's battles—weary fa' thae French that hae spilt sae muckle o' the auld Scottish blude! But neist morning she was quiet-like, and gaed about the house as before; only she was wan as ony lily, and I could see by the quivering of her lip that her thoughts were far beyont the doorstane. For twa or three days she hardly spoke even to me that had been her nurse; and I durstna venture to speak to her, forbye on ordinary matters of house-skep; for I felt that if I had named *his* name, I wad hae broken out into woman's weakness; and sma' was the comfort I could gie her, puir innocent lamb, in the hour of her heavy tribulation. Sae I tried to look as canty as I could, and put a' things out o' the way that might distress her wi' thoughts o' the past. But I was an auld fule for my pains; for I might hae kenned that there is naething sae dear to a woman in absence as the image of him she loves. She, puir thing, had a bit picture o' your father that she wore round her neck on a chain; and when she gaed to her lonesome bed, she kissed it, and put it under her pillow, and ilka night her prayers—for I often heard her pray, sleeping as I did in a wee closet aff her room—were less for hersel' than for your father. And nae wonder, for she was a sinless burd! The angels, when they cam' to tak' her awa', could hardly hae been whiter than she was; and I dinna believe that the breath was out o' her body before she heard the psalms o' heaven!

“Weel; it was nae lang time afore ye were born, Maister Norman, that your father gaed awa'; and to

say the truth, dear bairn as ye are to me now, I wadna hae cared if ye never had had an existence. For your bonny sweet mither was no like Leah, wha had the first o' the patriarch Jacob, and, will ye, nill ye, brought him a bairn ilka year, and whiles wad hae been glad o' twins. She was mair like douce Rachel, wha dee'd in child-bed, and was Jacob's first love; for whom he mourned, and set up a pillar upon her grave in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day, as is revealed unto us by the holy Scriptures. Ye made a narrow escape, Maister Norman, of being christened Benoni, though your father didna ken, when the ball shattered his breist, that his puir wife ayont the sea had given birth to a buirdly man-bairn.

“Weel do I mind the day when the awsome news was brought hame to us. There was nae letter, for the ithers offishers doubtless had muckle mair to do than to write—they were, ye ken, fighting for their ain lives in a far-awa' land; but the auld minister—that was worthy Mr Daniel Simpson, wha afore that had the parish of Kircuddly—he got a newspaper; and in it, wae's me! was your father's name as having died on the field o' battle. It wasna a field either, for the battle, as I heard tell, was focht among the mountains, like unto that terrible battle in Mount Gilboa, where Saul, king o' Israel, was slain. But, field or mountain, it was a' ane. There was nae doubt o' what had happened. The handsome light-hearted lad that we a' lo'ed sae weel, wi' an e'e like a gosshawk's, and a laugh

that rang through the house as cheery as the sang o' the mavis, was now but a bluidy corp, laid in unco mools, without a stane to mark his head !

“ Worthy Mr Simpson had a gude heart o' his ain, though he was nae great dab at the preaching, being somewhat lang-winded, and ower fond o' displaying that carnal knowledge, which is but sour sowens to them that hunger for the savoury meat o' doctrine. But he never was backward in the hour o' affliction, and that's mair than can be said for some that sit in the high places o' the synagogue. Sae he just came across to break the waefu' tidings to your puir mithers. But nae sooner did she see him enter the room wi' the sheet in his hand, and the marks o' sorrow on his face—for the auld man could hardly refrain himsel'—than her heart divined what he had to tell her ; she uttered a great cry, ‘ O, my Henry ! ’ and fell down on the floor like ane that had been struck wi' the lichtning. It was lang afore we could bring her round, and langer afore she could speak ; for her mind seemed to be taken frae her, and she could do naething but sit and tremble, puir thing, as if she had seen a spirit pass before her face, like that which appeared unto Eliphaz the Temanite, making all his bones to shake. Death is a terrible thing at ony time, and sad to witness, whether it be that of a strong man smitten down by sudden agony, or of a frail bit lassie creepin' awa' to her Creator after a lang and weary sickness ; but O, when it comes to us unseen, like a peal of thunder in a simmer sky—when we hear tell, without warning

and preparation, that them we lo'ed best on earth, and maybe better than we should lo'e ony earthly creature, have been ta'en awa' frae us for ever; and when we ken that we sall never again hear them speak or see them smile, nae wonder if the horror of darkness falls upon us as it did on that day when the Lord withheld the licht from the dwallins o' the Egyptians.

“The first thing that seemed to break the dwam o' her bewilderment, was my bringing you, a wee innocent babe, and laying you on her knee. Then the instinct o' the mither came back: she caught you up in her arms, and burst into a flood o' tears. I could say naething to her then, for my ain heart was ower full, and I weel kenned that sorrow maun hae its course; sae I just put worthy Mr Simpson to the door, for he could do her nae gude; and I drew down the window-blinds and darkened the room, and syne sat down mysel' upon a creepie, and wrapped the plaid around my head, and prayed that the Comforter might come unto her. Doubtless she had comfort after a season, but it wasna o' the common sort. Her comfort was the assurance that she wadna be left to tarry here lang in her bereavement, but that before the primroses o' spring blossomed on the braes, she wad be wi' him she had lost, in that blessed place where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain. That was what she said to me, no aboon sax days after the tidings cam', and I could see weel eneuch that she wasna lang for this warld. It's my belief that she had but ae thing heavy on her mind, and that was

the thocht o' leaving you behind her, a pair unfriended orphan. For though she had faith in the kindness o' the Lord, and dwalt upon His promise that He wad be a father to the fatherless, she was yet a mither; and your wee hands, as they closed round her fingers, were the cords that held her to the earth. If ever a bairn was prayed for, it was you. She held you in her bosom till her e'en closed in death, and the last words she uttered were words o' blessing on her babe. And then the licht gaed out, and there was hush and stillness in the chamber, but for the bit cry ye gave as I stooped to tak you from her."

My father had no near relatives. It was indeed believed that a cousin of his was settled in London, and engaged in some prosperous line of trade; but he had left Scotland at an early period of life, and maintained no communication with any of his former friends. My mother, however, had a brother much older than herself, a medical practitioner in Edinburgh, upon whom devolved the duties of my guardianship. Dr Alexander Buchanan was a bachelor of peculiar habits, regarding whom I shall presently have occasion to speak: meantime it is only necessary to say, that he cheerfully accepted a responsibility, which in Scotland is regarded almost in the light of a sacred duty—that the little money which remained after payment of my parent's simple debts was invested for my benefit—and that Eppie Osett, who, failing every other resource, would have carried me on her back through the world begging from door to door, received the

assurance that my education would be properly cared for, and shelter given me under my uncle's roof, so soon as it was considered advisable that I should be brought to Edinburgh. Until then it was arranged that I should remain with my nurse at the house of her brother, who rented a small farm in Selkirkshire ; as Dr Buchanan very naturally expressed a disinclination to being "fashed with bairns," whereof, as he pertinently remarked, he might, if so minded, have provided himself with a stock of his own.

Accordingly, in the bright days of spring, we removed from the little town wherein I was born, to the farm of the Birkenshaws, cultivated by honest Jamie Osett, the first place that I can remember, and probably the last that shall fade from my memory. It was a little steading, situated in one of those glens which are so common in that romantic pastoral district, by the side of a clear mountain stream, which, descending from the ridges that separate the valleys of the Tweed and Yarrow, flows in a long succession of rapid and pool, until it loses itself in that beautiful sheet of water, from which emerges the last-named river, so famous in Scottish song. Round the house were a few old trees, originally planted there to screen it from the blasts which in winter swept fiercely down the glen ; but beyond these, the face of the country was bare and unwooded, save that on the scaurs, on the very edge of the loose shingle, or curiously inserted among the rocks, some thorns and birches, of great age but stunted growth, still remained to show that, in

days long gone by, the title "forest," as applied to the district, had not been given in derision. There it was that I first became conscious of the beauty of external nature; where I plucked the gowan, and purple thyme, and yellow crow-foot from the mountain sward; and with my comrades, Davie and May Osett, plaited caps from the rushes that grew in the bonny meadow by Meggat-side, where the lapwings had their nests. Even now that pastoral region has for me a strong attraction, and inspires me with an intense sensation of delight, albeit it will bear no comparison with the grander beauty of the Highlands, or the richness of the more cultivated vales. Solitary it is not, though the farmsteadings and shepherds' houses lie far apart; for life is teeming everywhere, in air and water, on the hill-side and in the glen. In spring the call of the cuckoo, that "fairy voice," comes to you from the old thorn-tree on the crag; the hills are resonant with the bleating of a thousand lambs; the merry ephemeral swarm hover over the stream, or flit in clouds across the pool; and the speckled trout, watchful of his prey, leaps after them, or chases the shoal of glistening minnows among the stones of the rapid shallows. In summer, life becomes even more strongly developed, and in more gorgeous hues. The butterflies, white, and speckled, and red, and blue, dance over the meadows, blending their glorious colours with those of the tall flowers on which they light, until you cannot well distinguish the blossom from the butterfly, or the insect from the petal of its repose. There, too, the strong dragon-

flies, like shafts of topaz and beryl, shoot themselves from the long grass by the river side ; the water-pyot, scared from his stone, dips down under the ripple ; the pike, basking among the reeds on the margin of the loch, rushes out at your approach ; and the wild-duck, at the head of her brood yet unable to take the wing, steers away, with maternal instinct, to the depths. See the cattle in the ford, how they luxuriate in the coolness of the stream, standing belly-deep in the fresh water, and lowing to each other with a note of supreme satisfaction, such as assuredly no Malvern patient, swathed in wet bandages, ever emitted for the comfort of his friend who was being "packed" in the next apartment ! And when autumn comes, there is the merry song of the reaper ; the crowing of the muircock on the hill ; the call of the partridge from the field or the fern ; the happy festivities of harvest-home, from one farm-steading to another ; and that general intercourse, assistance, and friendly communion, which always marks the fall of the year as the most affectionate and kindly period. In winter only can the glens of the south of Scotland be justly termed solitary ; for solitary indeed they are when the snow-wreaths are lying thick and heavy, obliterating every landmark, filling up the water-courses, and rendering the mountain-tracts impassable even to the daring shepherd. But let the storm rage ever so wildly without, within the house all is comfort and warmth ; industry not suspended, but applied to a hundred matters of domestic convenience ; and household provision made for the

wants of the coming year. So the day went by swiftly, and when evening came, and all were gathered round the fire, many a tale and ballad, not then collected, but familiar through tradition to the peasantry, was recited for our wonder and delight. Eppie Osett, in respect of minstrel learning, would have put Ritson or Leyden to shame. She could not only repeat such fine historical ballads as "The Battle of Otterburn" and "Sir Patrick Spens," but she knew by heart most of the beautiful romantic ditties current on the Border, and she gave them forth with an animation and even pathos that produced the strongest effect upon her simple audience. Honest Jamie Osett did not deal in the pathetic, nor indeed did he possess any large store of rhyme, though on occasion he could rattle off the humorous ditty of "Our Gudeman" with much gusto and comic power. He was better versed in the prose legends, the tales of imagination and fairy lore, which, brought into this country in all probability by the old Norse settlers, continued for centuries to be the literary heritage of the people. One story in particular, the details of which I cannot now recall, used to entrance us all. It related to the adventures of a beautiful princess, who, for some fault or other of her own, or being under the influence of a malignant spell, was separated from her lover, and doomed never to know rest or happiness until she should reach an enchanted castle reared in a land where the sun never shone, and the wind never blew, far, far away beyond the uttermost limits of the earth. How she reached it, I cannot ex-

actly say ; but I think it was through the aid of a certain "Red Bull o' Norroway," who bore her on his back through forests filled with giants and ogres, over water-floods where the kelpies lay, past caverns where witches were stirring their caldrons, and down to the shore of a desolate and shipless sea. The story ended of course happily for the lovers, about whom, I rather think, I did not feel much interested. The red bull was certainly the favourite hero ; for I can remember wondering, after I had been put into my crib, whether he bore any resemblance to Willie Laidlaw's muckle bull, a ferocious animal much given to assault and battery, whose roaring from the other side of the loch was terrible to our infant ears.

The impressions of childhood, imperfect though they are, almost always exercise a large influence over us in future years. It is observable that persons who have been exclusively reared in towns, rarely exhibit, in later life, any marked relish or desire for country sports and occupations ; whereas those brought in childhood from the country to the city, never forego their early associations, but always contemplate a return to the scenes that delighted their infancy. "*O Rus, quando ego te aspiciam!*" was the ejaculation not of a town-bred man, but of one who never had forgotten the freshness of the Apulian breeze, the wooded heights of Mount Vultur, or its deep recesses gay with the asphodel and anemone. Virgil, among the pomps and luxuries of Rome, and beneath the roof of the lordly Mæcenas, still heard in his dreams the humming of the bees and

the rustling of the beeches around his dear old Mantuan home ; and often in the plenitude of his fame recalled the happy hours when he first courted the muse by the banks of the winding Mincius.

I attribute to those early impressions the strong disinclination which I have always felt to a city life ; the pleasures of which are, to my thinking, more than counterbalanced by its pains. The excitement of it fatigues one ; and I soon become weary of that perpetual emulation and straining after effect which is the characteristic of city men, and which, in the great majority of cases, resolves itself into positive egotism. I much prefer the fresh air to an atmosphere contaminated with smoke, the morning song of the birds to the jingling of the dust-cart, the mild lowing of oxen to the obscene cursing of the drunken operative ; and I would rather stroll, pursuing my own run of thought, by the side of a wimpling burn, or over a common of sweet-scented furze, than walk along George Street or Pall-Mall in the height of the fashionable season. Fortunately there is among men a vast diversity of taste, which I doubt not tends in the aggregate to the general comfort and happiness. There is an old saying, that what is one man's meat is another man's poison ; and I daresay that a town devotee, if called upon to justify his preference, could assign most excellent reasons for adhering to that mode of existence which is most consonant to his inclination.

I was scarce nine years of age, when a letter from my uncle, Dr Buchanan, was received at the Birken-

shaws, announcing that he was now ready to redeem his pledge, by taking me into his household in Edinburgh, as it was full time that my regular education should commence. I pass over the sorrow which this message brought to the whole family, for I had lived so long with the Osetts that I had become as it were a child of their own ; and though I had been told that one day I must expect to be separated from them, that sounded rather like an obscure and indefinite hint than the warning of an event at hand. Fortunately our preparations for the journey were of the simplest kind, so that the interval of leave-taking was shortened. The devoted Eppie, refreshed by her long sojourn in the place of her nativity, once more took up the staff of pilgrimage ; and on a fine summer morning, when the lambs were racing on the meadows, and the trees just clad in their light-green verdure, I was lifted, amidst a storm of tears, kisses, and benedictions, into the carrier's cart ; and immediately afterwards we were jolting along the shore of St Mary's Loch, on our way to the hoary metropolis of the north.

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE BUCHANAN.

MY uncle, Dr Andrew Buchanan, was, as I have already said, a bachelor; and long celibacy had developed certain eccentric habits which prevented him, though his talents were really considerable, from occupying a high place in society. Naturally shy, he never had made an effort to overcome that constitutional defect; so that his manner towards men was abrupt and unconciliatory, and towards women, awkward and diffident in the extreme. Left in early youth very much to his own guidance, with little fortune to sustain him or interest to push him on, yet proud, as most Scotsmen are, of a good ancestral name, he unfortunately conceived the idea that he was unduly slighted, and treated by the world at large with less consideration than was his due. Men of that temperament are apt to become exceedingly jealous and irritable, construing into a deliberate affront the most trivial mark of inattention, and never reflecting, that if people will not take the pains to make themselves agreeable, they can-

not in reason expect to be overwhelmed by gratuitous courtesy.

If my uncle had betimes taken to himself a sensible wife, who would have found no difficulty whatever in exercising dominion over him, this incipient misanthropy, for such it really was, might have been cured, and the jaundice purged from his system. But here again he was unfortunate. He chose to fall in love with a consummate flirt, who, as her friends alleged, kept a regular list of her admirers ; and after having been victimised and rendered ridiculous in every conceivable way, to the infinite amusement of a heartless circle who thought it excellent fun, the Doctor was brought up to the point of a formal proposal, and then unscrupulously rejected. In his rage and agony at finding himself so palpably befooled—for the young lady was barbarous enough not to spare him a single pang—Andrew Buchanan, like the Prince of Morocco, took a solemn vow,

“ Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage ;”

which vow, being registered, he kept thenceforth inviolate.

It was universally allowed that he was a man of first-rate ability, a good scholar, and a sound physician, qualities which ought to have put him on the way to fortune, or at least raised him to eminence in the estimation of his professional brethren. But he did not possess sufficient tact to avail himself of these advantages ;

his manner was rather repulsive than conciliatory ; he shrunk back when he ought to have put himself forward ; and sometimes committed the worse error of maintaining with spasmodic energy some opinion which already had been denounced as heterodox by the medical faculty at large. If called in to visit a patient, he exhibited none of that kindly interest and friendly solicitude which sits so well on the modern Machaon. He would ask a few gruff questions, feel the pulse, survey the tongue, write out some common prescription ; and then, without a word of civil consolation, depart, never to renew his visit unless he was specially summoned. No doctor who adopts such a method can hope to attain to an extensive domestic practice. What fond mother would a second time be party to calling in a monster who exhibited no kind of sympathy with dear little Tommy suffering from the measles ? What dowager with shattered nerves could repose confidence in a Goth, who told her in so many words that she might have spared herself the trouble of sending for him ? What mattered it if, when Azrael, the angel of Death, was really standing by the couch, Dr Buchanan was prompt and able to give him battle, and oftentimes to scare him away ? Not at every sickbed is the gloomy-browed Azrael in attendance ; and we form our estimate of the physician's skill, and accord him our confidence, rather from the manner in which he deals with our minor ailments and complaints, than from his acknowledged reputation for ability in cases of a desperate nature.

Again, it would be false to assert that my worthy uncle was popular among his brethren. He was, I firmly believe, superior to most of them in scientific attainment—that is, he had read and experimented more—but he was somewhat deficient in judgment, and apt to be led astray by new discoveries, or what appeared to be such, before their phenomena had been accurately tested, or their principle satisfactorily ascertained. In fact, he was very credulous; a tendency which, in medical men, is dangerous, inasmuch as it leads to the suspicion, if not the reality, of empiricism. He was one of the very first who, in this country, professed their belief in the curative powers of Animal Magnetism; a daring avowal at the time, when the pretended miracles of Prince Hohenlohe were creating vast excitement on the Continent. If he did not absolutely assert, he certainly did not deny the possibility of *clairvoyance*, magic crystals, and spiritual communications; he was a diligent student of the writings of Swedenborg, whom he would by no means admit to be an impostor; and I suspect, from certain manuscripts of his which afterwards came into my possession, that he was more than tinctured with belief in the doctrines of judicial astrology. Such aberrations of the intellect might possibly, at the present day, when there is a renewed taste for wonders, be forgiven, or treated as harmless hallucinations; but at the time to which I allude, they were vehemently denounced by the medical faculty as wicked and presumptuous heresies, scandalous in themselves, and beyond the pale of forgiveness when

avowed by a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Thus neglected by the public from his own fault, and disowned by his brethren on account of his singular and extravagant opinions, my poor uncle gradually became a recluse, and fell into those habits of slovenry and carelessness, from which, when once formed, an elderly scholar can no more escape than a fly from the web of a spider.

The maintenance of an establishment such as his does not necessitate a large expenditure. He kept two servants; one of whom, a strong untidy wench from the Highlands, whom no wooer was likely to assail, undertook the whole of the housework, which she was enabled to perform by restricting her dusting operations to a hebdomadal visitation with the broom. The other inmate was a decrepid old serving-man with a cantankerous temper aggravated by deafness, who was simply rude to his master, but insolent to every one else. Indeed, so far as usefulness went, Saunders Jaap was a domestic luxury that might have been dispensed with, only there was no way of getting rid of him; for though discharged twice a-year by my uncle, he obstinately refused to quit. Beyond cleaning shoes, pilfering snuff, appropriating aged garments, laying violent hands upon as much victual as he could procure, and insulting a stray visitor, I am not aware that Mr Jaap performed any distinct function in the house. Out of it, he was nominally doorkeeper of my uncle's lecture-room, to the deep disgust of the students, from whom, in the intervals of swearing (for the old wretch cursed like a

second Shimei), he never ceased to demand sixpences in the way of subsidy.

Dr Buchanan was not a Professor in the University. His peculiar notions prevented him from aspiring to such a situation ; and even had it been otherwise, the number of those who were really his friends was so small that he could not reckon upon sufficient interest. But limited though his expenses were, he could not make ends meet without some source of income beyond the receipts of his dwindling practice, so he set up a private class, wherein he lectured on chemistry—a branch of science which, of all others, he was most competent to explain. After a year or two, those lectures became sufficiently popular to attract a considerable audience, and to return something like a competence ; and the necessary exertion, besides preventing him from lapsing into total indolence, had a salutary effect both upon his health and spirits. He occupied a small house in St John Street, at right angles to the Canongate, a quiet locality in the neighbourhood of St Leonards and of Salisbury Crags.

When the cart containing Eppie and myself, with our small complement of luggage, drew up at my uncle's door, a serious obstacle to our entrance presented itself in the shape of Mr Saunders' Jaap, who, besides being that day in an unusually ungracious mood, had made up his mind to resist any permanent intrusion on the premises. Three vigorous pulls at the bell having proved ineffectual to elicit any notice, the carrier, Watty Shaw, a powerful youth from the braes

of Yarrow, commenced beating a tattoo upon the door with the butt-end of his whip, whereupon Jaap rushed forth like a mastiff assaulted in its kennel.

“Wha’s scoondrel are ye, that daur to mak’ sic a din? What brings ye here disturbin’ honest folk at this time o’ day? Saul o’ me! but I hae mair than half a mind to lend ye sic a lounder as wad gar your head ring on the kerb-stane, ye muckle unsonsie brute!”

“Ay, man?” replied Watty, nothing daunted, “and whaur, think ye, wad my whup be then? Steek your mouth, ye dommer’d auld deevil, and lift the boxes in. *You* lend me a lounder! Lordsake, puir body! ye haena pith to thraw the neck o’ a hen.”

“Maybe I’ll see your neck thrawn ae day at the tap o’ the West Bow!” retorted Jaap, keeping, however, cautiously within reach of the door; “Ye’ll be a Yetholm tinkler or a caird frae Blair-an-gone, stravagin’ about the country, stealing mair claes than ye souther kettles! Gang awa’ wi’ ye—there’s nane o’ your sort wanted here!”

“Whisht, ye auld foumart!” said Watty, “whisht, or it may be the waur for ye! Isna this Doctor Buchanan’s?”

“And what has the likes o’ you to say to Doctor Buchanan?” snarled Saunders.

“Naething for mysel’,” said Watty, depositing a box on the pavement; “but this bairn is the Doctor’s nephoy, and this woman is his nurse, Eppie Osett, come frae thé Birkenshaws; and it wad set ye better

to be helping them down, than to stand there, girning like a tod without its teeth."

"I never heard tell of ony nephoy," muttered Jaap, "and I'm no gaun to let in gangrel folk whether I ken them or no. There's a hantle siller spunes in the pantry. Forbye, the Doctor's far frae weel, and canna be fashed wi' naebody. Sae just gae your wa's, and bide till ye are speered for."

Uttering these hospitable remarks, Mr Jaap was in the act of slamming to the door, when he was confronted by Eppie Osett, who sprang like a lioness from the cart.

"Sinner that ye are!" cried Eppie, "and waur nor sinner—for ye wad do Herod's wark without Herod's wages—wad ye daur to keep this innocent wean out o' his uncle's house, in a wat evening? Weel do I mind your ill-faured, black-a-vised face, Saunders Jaap, though it's aught years and mair since I clappit een upon you. Think ye I hae forgotten that ye tried to wile half-a-crown out of my pouch when I cam' here to tell your maister that his bonny young sister was a corp, and when ye kenned that we hadna money enough to pay for her winding-sheet? Stand out o' my gate, ye worthless blackguard, or I'll gar ye carry the marks of my haill ten commandments to your grave!"

I know not what response Mr Jaap might have made to this formidable threat, had not a new interlocutor arrived in the person of my uncle, who, hearing the dispute, sallied down stairs in his dressing-gown,

and gave us a welcome, the warmth of which I thoroughly felt in spite of the oddity of his appearance.

“Come in, come in, my poor little fellow!” he said, bestowing on me a vigorous kiss, “and come ye in too, my good Eppie Osett. God give me patience! did that drunken vagabond try to put you from my door! Saunders Jaap—I have endured your insolence for well-nigh twenty years, but this puts an end to the account. Did I not warn you that Mr Norman was coming here this day? and did I not desire you to tell Peggie to make his room ready, and to have the tea-things set out? But it’s no use talking to such a selfish brute. Saunders Jaap, you quit this house to-morrow!”

“Blythe wad I be to get rid of ye,” grumbled Jaap, “but your temper’s getting sae bad that nae one else will live wi’ ye. Hoo was I to ken your nephoy frae ony ither bairn in the Canongate? Tak’ him in, gin it be your will—I’m sure I hae nae objection; and I’ll quit the morn, if that be your mind—weel I wat it’s little I get for staying! But I rede ye first to hire somebody to pu’ ye out when ye chance to stoiter into the fire.”

The rapid disparition of Mr Jaap saved him in all probability from a severe contusion, for my uncle had caught up a bag which he seemed disposed to hurl at the audacious serving-man. We were taken into the house and supplied with refreshments, Dr Buchanan watching me, as I ate, with an interest which was somewhat embarrassing. Presently, however, he seemed

to lapse into a fit of abstraction ; and after having summoned Peggie, the servant-of-all-work, and desired her to show me to my room, he took up a book and was instantly absorbed in its contents.

Eppie Osett and I followed the damsel up-stairs to a little attic, where there was a table, a chair, and one diminutive crib without curtains. It looked very cheerless, and though the season was early summer, there was a feeling of cold, and a damp odour in the apartment.

“Are ye sure, my woman,” said Eppie Osett, after having carefully scrutinised the room, “that this is where my bairn is to sleep? He’s no used-like to lying by his lane, and I think for a week or twa it wad be mair convenient if he lay in the room wi’ me. Whaur am I to be putten up?”

“Troth, I dinna ken,” replied the Highland damsel: “I heerd tell o’ naebody coming but the laddie. It’s my mind that ye wasna expected.”

A flush came over Eppie’s face as she seized the tin candlestick with one hand, and my jacket with the other.

“Come wi’ me, my blessed bairn!” she said, “I maun hae this redd up afore ye lay your head on a pillow ! It’s no ony uncle ye hae that is strong enough to twine us twa.”

“Mr Buchanan!” said Eppie, marching into the apartment, “ye’ll understand that it’s no for mysel’ I speak, for may His name be praised, there’s them at the Birkenshaws wad be ower glad to hae me wi’ them.

But is it your pleasure that this sweet lamb is to be left here, wi' naebody to look after him but a Hieland lass, and that uncircumcised Philistine, Jaap, wha's lug I wuss ye had smitten aff this day, as the Apostle Peter did that of Malchus, wha was servant to the high-priest? If that be your wull, sir, say it at ance. I ken whare Watty Shaw puts up; he'll be glad to gie us a cast; and by the morn's night we baith may see the Yarrow."

"God bless me! what's that you say?" said my uncle, starting from his studies. "I told them to make everything comfortable for Norman—Is there anything wrong? The fact is, Mrs Osett, that I know little about domestic arrangements, but if you have any suggestions to make——"

"I hae naething but a simple question to ask, Doctor Buchanan, and ye can answer it, ay or no. Am I to be separated from my dear bairn? These auld hands were the first that received him when he cam' into this weary warld, the child o' sorrow and pain—these hands lifted him from the bosom of his dead mother, sinless angel that she was—and wi' these hands I am ready to work for his daily bread, if kith and kin should forsake him. But as to my gieing him up, it's no to be thought o'; for where he goes I will go, and where he lodges I will lodge. The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death shall part us!"

"Confound my stupidity!" said Dr Buchanan, "I never once thought about that. Yes, yes, Mrs Osett, you are right, perfectly right—somebody must look

after the boy ; for I, God help me ! have enough to do to look after myself ; and Peggie, though a decent lass, is but a tawpie. No doubt of it, Mrs Osett, you must stay, and I'll settle with you about wages to-morrow."

"I'm muckle obligated to your honour," replied Eppie, "but dinna ye think that I'll tak' plack or bawbee for looking after my ain bairn. I'll stay wi' you, sin' it is your pleasure, and I'll do what I can to hae the house redd up, for it's no just what it ought to be ; but I say unto you as Elisha said unto Naaman the Syrian, that I will receive nothing of thy hand."

"Well, well ! that's all arranged," said Dr Buchanan, "so there's no more to be said on the subject."

"But whaur am I to put the bairn for this nicht ?" persisted Eppie ; "I canna let him lie a' nicht his lane, in yon wee bit room at the tap o' the house, and I kenna whaur I am to lay my ain head."

"Heaven grant me patience !" cried the Doctor, with a vigorous pull at the bell ; "was there ever an unfortunate man so cursed with useless servants as I am ! Here !—you—Peggie—idiot—why don't you show Mrs Osett to the blue room ?"

"The blue room, did ye say, sir ?" stammered the Highland maid ; "it's the best room in the hoos."

"That's the very reason why I wish Master Norman and Mrs Osett to have it, you fool ! I never see company, and where would be the sense of letting it stand empty ?"

"But it's no empty, sir, ava'. It's been occupied thae four months."

“Occupied?” cried my uncle. “Who the devil has occupied it? Speak out, you slut, or I’ll instantly send for the police!”

“’Deed, sir, it wasna my doing,” sobbed the damsel. “He wad hae the room to himsel’, for ought I could say to the contrair; and he threatened he would ding out my harns if I ever lat ye ken.”

“He? whom do you mean by he?”

“Just Saunders Jaap, yer honour.”

The Doctor started from his chair in a towering passion.

“I never committed murder,” said he, “but the temptation is strong upon me now! The scoundrel! —the useless, insolent old vagabond! I know him to be a thief and a liar, but I never thought he durst have done this. Give me a candle, woman—I’ll see to this instantly.”

So saying, the Doctor rushed towards the blue room, and we, excited by curiosity, followed. There, sure enough, lay Mr Jaap, snoring in bed, as luxuriously lodged as any gentleman in the land. A strong odour of coarse tobacco which pervaded the apartment, indicated that the sensual Saunders, before retiring to rest, had derived solace from a pipe; while the remains of a cold fowl, and a brandy-bottle almost empty of contents, showed that his creature comforts had been duly cared for.

“Get up, you infernal rascal!” shouted my uncle. “Get out of that this instant, or I’ll brain you with the water-jug!”

Mr Jaap opened a lack-lustre eye, but displayed no alacrity in obeying the command.

“Was ye wanting onything frae me?” he said.

“Wanting anything from you?” repeated my uncle, mechanically.

“Ay—for if ye want naething, what’s the sense o’ disturbing folk at this time o’ nicht? Can ye no let a body rest in peace?”

“Confound your impudence! Out of that instantly, or I’ll have you lugged to the Tolbooth!”

“Weel—since that’s your wull, I’m conformable. But ye had better bide outside the door till I put on my breeks.”

“And finish the brandy, you incorrigible thief!—my best French brandy, too!”

“Oo, if ye grudge it, ye’re wELCOME to what’s in the bottle! Puir stuff it is too, though ye mak’ sic a sang about it—no to be compared to Hieland whisky. And whaur is it your pleasure that I should sleep this nicht?”

“In the gutter or the King’s Park; anywhere but under my roof!”

“Ye canna pit me out till the morning,” said Jaap, deliberately, “it’s clean again the law. And there’s wages and board-wages—I’ll no stir a foot till ye pay me them; I’ve had nae regular warning. And I hold ye responsible for my claes, forbye——”

Here my uncle lost all remnant of patience. He seized Jaap, who by this time was struggling into his garments, by the neck, thrust him down stairs and out

of the house, and then pitched the remainder of his apparel from the window.

“The Lord be praised!” ejaculated my uncle, helping himself to the driblet of brandy that remained. “I’ve got rid at last of the greatest nuisance of my life!”

My nurse and I being thus installed, matters went on more smoothly and comfortably in Dr Buchanan’s establishment than before. Up to that time the poor man had been entirely at the mercy of his servants, and not having the faintest notion of housekeeping, was sometimes in positive danger of being starved. Peggie M’Craw, as may readily be supposed, had never studied the works of Mrs Dalgairns, that oracle of the Scottish kitchen; consequently her style of cookery was such as would hardly have been tolerated by a Hottentot. But in justice to Peggie, it must be stated that even the ingenious Dalgairns would have found some difficulty in sending up a banquet from a kitchen void of the most ordinary culinary utensils. Now, among her other accomplishments, Eppie was an excellent cook, well versed in the composition of the favourite old Scottish dishes, and was, moreover, a first-rate manager; so, before she had been in office many days, a vast reform was effected in the commissariat department; and my uncle, who previously might have been indicted for conspiracy on account of his lean and hungry look, waxed quite plump and pursy, and began to throw out some indefinite hints as to the propriety of asking some friends to dine with him; a notion

which, I am persuaded, had not entered the brain of the worthy gentleman for the last twenty years.

As for myself, I was sent in due time to school ; but that time did not arrive until the ensuing winter. Scotland in general, and Edinburgh in particular, were then in a state of pleasurable excitement such as had not been known for centuries. George the Fourth, whose personal popularity had been somewhat damaged in consequence of the trial of Queen Caroline, had, very wisely, resolved to make an attempt upon the affections of his northern subjects, by paying them a royal visit ; and as this was the first time that royalty had vouchsafed so much since the accession of the House of Hanover to the throne, the popular enthusiasm was tremendous. In vain did infant Liberalism, hardly emancipated from its swaddling-clothes, insist upon the insensate folly of a cordial national reception, and demonstrate that a severe reticence and cold respect was all that ought to be exhibited by the people to their sovereign. The instinctive feeling of the people taught them otherwise. They resolved that this should be an ovation, unparalleled of its kind ; and they gave no heed to the grumbling of the disaffected, though they grumbled with unusual pertinacity. But the Royal visit, the first public event of which I have any distinct remembrance, must form the subject of a new and separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

GEORGE IV. IN EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH, though even then a noble city, had not at the period to which I allude attained its present magnificence. Much of the New Town was still unbuilt, in particular the western portion, situated upon grounds belonging to the Earl of Moray which were still private enclosures. The beautiful gardens which divide Heriot Row from Queen Street were then simply bleaching-fields, and the elegant suburb of Inverleith had not yet been constructed. Its growth and extension has been more gradual than that of other cities, but it has never experienced a check; and although it is by no means probable that Edinburgh will ever become an emporium of trade or a seat of manufactures, it possesses more attractions as a place of residence than any other city in the United Kingdom, with the exception of imperial London.

When it became known that George the Fourth intended to visit his ancient kingdom of Scotland, intense was the excitement that prevailed. If there is

one feature in the Scottish character more marked than another, it is the desire common to all classes of exhibiting their country in the most favourable aspect to the eyes of strangers. Hence in the old days when Scotland was a separate kingdom, and in reality one of the poorest in Europe, foreigners were amazed at the magnificence exhibited at the Court of Holyrood, at the masques and public rejoicings which attended a royal progress, and at the semi-regal state maintained by some of the greatest of the nobility. It is true that after the Reformation, or at least after the deposition of Queen Mary, public ceremonies fell into disuse, a gloomy asceticism superseded the ancient joyous spirit, and the more elegant forms of court entertainment were ill supplied by a coarse and illicit revelry. The union of the crowns in the person of James the Sixth, threw over Scotland a gloom which lasted for a long period. Civil wars and dissensions, political and polemical strife, both distracted and impoverished the nation. It became of no weight at all in the councils of Europe; for though it still retained a Parliament, and had a separate Ministry, it was justly regarded by foreign powers as a mere appanage to England; and having lost its importance as a state, it possessed no other attraction. The union of the kingdoms did not at first effect any amelioration in the social state of Scotland; nay, it rather seemed for a time to produce a detrimental effect, by causing the removal of the nobility and members of Parliament to London, and depriving Edinburgh of its last claim to recognition

as a metropolis. It is not to be wondered at that the great measure to which the present wealth and enterprise of Scotland must be mainly attributed should have been long unpopular even with the middle classes; and should have been felt by the lesser nobility and gentry as a grievous blow to their importance, and a serious injury to their order, inasmuch as it lessened their chances of lucrative public employment. The insurrections of 1715 and 1745 threw a further impediment in the way of progress; and the eighteenth century had well-nigh closed, before Scotland took that wonderful start which has since raised her to such high consideration.

Notwithstanding all these drawbacks affecting her material wealth, Scotland still continued to preserve a fair literary reputation. The names of Hume, Robertson, Reid, Smith, and Blair were well known beyond the boundary of the Tweed; Thomson and Beattie proved that the fire of poetry was not extinguished; and Smollett, as a novelist, must be ranked equal with, if not superior to Fielding. Also, in the Northern universities, physics were studied with a zeal and diligence unknown elsewhere; so that, however much Englishmen might be inclined to sneer at Scottish pride and poverty, they could not refuse them credit for considerable intellectual attainment. The fame of the University of Edinburgh, in its medical and metaphysical departments, began to attract visitors, and to initiate that intercourse which might now be more aptly designated as a fusion. But it was reserved

for Sir Walter Scott, by far the most wonderful literary phenomenon of his age, to renovate the history of his country; to give it prominence in the eyes of Europe; to invest its grey towers and mouldering ruins with the glowing tints of romance; to portray the character of its people with marvellous minuteness and fidelity; to give a new enchantment to its beautiful scenery and an interest to its every relic; and to transform it from an obscure and half-forgotten region, seldom named abroad and very rarely visited, to a land of poetry and renown. Well may Scotland be proud of that colossal genius; for not only did he raise its literary reputation to the highest point which it ever attained, but he gave it new life, vigour, and energy, restored it to its pristine place among the nations, swept away the gloomy cloud that had obscured it so long, and prepared it for its new career.

Scarce one-half of that great man's work was accomplished when the royal visit was announced; but so strong had been the effect of his writings upon the national mind, so completely had he fascinated his countrymen and imbued them with his own romantic spirit, that they would not be content with a gathering however enthusiastic, or a reception however cordial, unless it partook of the nature of a pageant recalling the memories of the past. That an idea so ultra-romantic, and so opposed to the sober usages of the present century, should have possessed a hard-headed people like the Scots, might well excite the astonishment of those who knew not the deep under-current

of national pride, not easily distinguishable from fanaticism, which often, far more than reason, actuates their conduct, and which alone can furnish the explanation of many an historical anomaly. But it was so determined and done. The universal feeling was that the King's reception in Scotland should be of an exclusively Scottish character; and as the customs and costumes of the present age were not peculiarly distinctive, the only alternative was to fall back on those of the past, and to make the processions resemble as nearly as possible those which would have been marshalled at the coronation of the last of the Scottish kings.

So the fiery cross was sped "o'er mountain and through glen," and the Highlanders were summoned once more to display a general gathering of the clans. They answered with alacrity to the call; and from Dunkeld to Caithness there was such a brushing-up of sporrans and furbishing of dirks and claymores as would, eighty years previously, have stricken the hearts of the Lowlanders with consternation. I remember well being taken to the green in front of Heriot Row, to see the mustering of the sons of the Gael, whose stalwart forms and tartan array inspired me with awe and veneration. Of course I knew not that many of those sinewy warriors, than whom Achilles, clad in the divine armour of Vulcan, could scarce have looked more terrible and resplendent, followed the humble but exceedingly useful calling of chairmen and street-porters. If I had known it, I question whether my

admiration would have been diminished ; for Achilles himself, at the Court of Lycomedes, assumed a disguise less creditable than the greatcoat and leather straps of the caddie ; and yet, in the camp before Troy, no one dared to allude to his performances at the distaff and the loom.

To a stranger unacquainted with the cause of the excitement, the streets of Edinburgh must have presented an extraordinary spectacle. Tartan, I need hardly say, was in the ascendant ; for every man who wrote himself a Mac, considered it a point of honour to don the philabeg. Some Macs there were, however, especially of the Gallovidian breed, M' Candlishes, M' Caskies, M' Crackens, M' Haffies, M' Letchies, M' Ritchies, M' Whannels, M' Whinnies, and M' Whirterers, whose pedigree no bard could unravel, and whose checker was unknown. But even for them there was balm in Gilead. They might either claim affinity with the MacGregor, alleging a remote change of name in consequence of the proscription of that warlike sept ; or, if expense was of no moment, they could procure at wonderfully short notice, through the medium of enterprising haberdashers, tartan of an entirely new pattern and brilliant hues, to be set apart for their glorification, and that of their heirs for ever. Next to the Gael in number were the Royal Archers, whose antique costume would have been really picturesque, but for the absurd ruff which they wore round the neck—a palpable anachronism, as the traditions of the body-guard are much more ancient than the invention

of starch. As in duty bound, the retainers of the Lyon Court shone out in blazoned splendour—

“ Heralds and pursuivants, by name,
Bute, Islay, Marchmont, Rothsay, came
In painted tabards, proudly showing
Gules, Argent, Or, and Azure glowing.”

Pages, beef-eaters, and yeomen of the guard met you at every turn. Only a few jackmen from the Border were wanting to give a complete realisation of the picture so vividly portrayed in *Marmion*. For those who had no pretext for masquerading, heather was provided, to be worn in the hat, and stars and cockades bearing the white cross of St Andrew. Every one was expected to exhibit some kind of decoration; and by common consent all traces of mourning disappeared, and black was a forbidden colour.

I remember perfectly the difficulty which we experienced in making our way through the encumbered streets, on the day when the King landed, to the gallery at the corner of York Place, for which we had tickets, in order to witness the procession. Brought up in a secluded pastoral district, I felt both bewildered and awed at the spectacle of such a mighty mass of humanity; for not only were the streets so thronged as to obstruct the passage, but the Calton Hill was crowded to the very top, and no pinnacle or place of vantage, however dizzy or dangerous, but was occupied by an eager group. The galloping of the horses, the flash and clash of steel, and the stunning discharge of artillery from the Castle, fairly took away my senses;

and though by no means devoid of curiosity, I would very willingly have given my St Andrew's cross, the most valued thing in my possession, to any benevolent genie that would have wafted me away to the quiet banks of the Meggat. We reached the stand, however, without any mishap ; and, perched in a place of safety, I had ample leisure to survey, with childish wonder, the stirring scene beneath, to pester my good-natured uncle with a succession of disjointed questions, and occasionally to regale myself with sugar almonds, of which nurse Osett had given me a supply.

My recollection of the procession itself is vivid as to its general feature, but indistinct as to details. I remember hearing afar off the sound of tumultuous cheering mingled with military music, whereat there was a sudden movement and swaying of the crowd immediately below us, and a hum of expectation which deepened into a roar as the leading horsemen, in crimson and gold, the Lord Lyon and his suite, came into sight. Gorgeous was the array that followed, knights and squires on prancing steeds, cavalry, Highlanders, yeomen, in almost interminable succession, until an open carriage, drawn by (I know not how many) splendid led horses, rounded into the square, and a deafening shout of acclamation welcomed the presence of the King.

It is a common observation, and has almost passed into a proverb, that children are easily pleased ; meaning thereby, I presume, that they are never critical as to the congruity of any spectacle which they behold,

but regard the passing pageant with absorbing wonder and delight. I am rather inclined to doubt the soundness of that position. I think that children are very often critical after their own peculiar fashion, and that the conclusions which they form through natural induction are sometimes more shrewd and sensible than those of their elders, who are biassed by prepossession or prejudice. At all events, I shall frankly confess that my first impression on gazing at George the Fourth was one of sad disappointment. Although my education was not far advanced, I had read something and heard more about kings, and I had seen their effigies set forth in picture-books; and my fixed idea was that a king never went anywhere, even to breakfast, without a jewelled crown on his head, a gorgeous mantle on his shoulders, a sceptre in one hand, and a golden ball surmounted by a cross in the other. What was the reality that I beheld? A very stout elderly gentleman, almost bursting through his clothes, with a swollen face and elaborate periwig, bowing from side to side with a sort of mechanical motion! Was that indeed the King? Why, he was not half so fine as the other king who headed the procession—(I had been particularly fascinated by the apparition of the King-at-Arms, whose equipment that day, I am satisfied, gave the hint for the sketch of Courade, Marquis of Montserrat, in the *Talisman*)—and as for dignity, I could discern nothing of the kind. Young radical that I was! I had hit upon the real blot. The palpable absurdity lay in the medieval character of the pageant.

To have made it congruous and intelligible, George the Fourth should have appeared in the costume of Harry the Eighth, which would have suited him remarkably well, and in that dress his undeniably fine presence would have made him the stateliest among the stately. As it was, but for a certain self-possession and air of high-breeding, scarce, however, to be distinguished at a momentary glance, he might have been mistaken for that omnivorous alderman, Sir William Curtis, who pertinaciously followed in his train.

Still that was the King, no doubt of it,—a corpulent embodiment of power, might, and majesty; and no wonder that he was surprised and delighted with the warmth of the popular reception. No such ovation had ever greeted him in England: indeed, during the Queen's trial, he had become an object of vituperation to the multitude, who were but too well acquainted with the scandals of the period, and whose rough sense of equity had been offended by a charge of infidelity being preferred against the wife, when the husband was notoriously liable to the same reproach. When he came to Scotland all personal considerations were cast aside. The homage of the nation was paid to the king, and not to the man. It was loyalty that dictated the movement, not affection or esteem; a signal proof of the deep-rooted attachment of the nation to the principle of hereditary monarchy.

One other glimpse I obtained of George the Fourth, and that was on the occasion of the procession from Holyrood House to the Castle. On the day of his

entry into Edinburgh, the weather was propitious, the sun shone out brightly, and gave lustre to the pageant. But the effect of the later procession was marred by a heavy wind and drenching rain, most damaging to plumage and embroidery. We had places in a gallery erected on the esplanade of the Castle Hill, and, as I remember, had to wait a long time before the procession appeared. The plight of the Royal Archers, who lined the way, was piteous to behold. Most woe-ful did they look with their dripping hats and thawed ruffs, exposed to the pelting of the storm on a day when even Robin Hood would have been glad to leave the deer of Sherwood unmolested, and take refuge in the hermitage of Friar Tuck. There was, however, one lull, in the midst of which two persons of unpretending appearance, and in ordinary costume, walked up the centre of the way. One of them was a tall man of massive build, with a slight stoop in his shoulders and an imperfection in his gait,—a man whom, when you once had seen him, you felt certain you could recognise again at any distance of time. His companion did not attract my attention ; but I remember well that, as they passed, there arose from the crowd a cheer of more than common heartiness and fervour, and I heard my uncle say that these were Sir Walter Scott and Mr Peel, then Secretary of State.

Amidst the plashing of the rain and the blustering of the wind, up rode the cavalcade, gallantly contending with the elements ; the Regalia being carried by the representatives of the first houses in the land. Up,

too, came the royal carriage, but this time it was prudently closed ; and yet the assembled multitude were not balked of the sight of the monarch, for shortly after he had entered the grand old fortress, when the gale was blowing most fiercely, and the great folds of the royal standard were rushing out, George the Fourth appeared alone on the brow of the highest battery, erect and commanding, in the view of all the people, and such a shout arose as possibly never before was given in greeting to a king.

Of the rest of the proceedings and shows of that memorable period—the illuminations, bonfires, and the like—I retain but a faint impression. What I have already noted is all I can recall without an effort ; and though it may hardly be worth the telling, for a more perfect record exists elsewhere, I could not bring myself to omit mention of a pageant certainly the most magnificent which has been witnessed in the present century, and perhaps without a parallel since the Field of the Cloth of Gold. And yet, notwithstanding the universal enthusiasm which was displayed, the vast concourse of people from all parts of the country to behold their monarch, and the gorgeous parade of ceremony, sure I am of this, that a far wider and deeper homage of loyalty, affection, and reverence, than was paid to George the Fourth, is accorded to Queen Victoria when she seeks her Highland home.

CHAPTER IV.

EDUCATIONAL PERIOD.

HOWEVER pleasant it may be in after life—and I admit that it *is* very pleasant—to talk over school-days with a crony who has a vivid recollection of the mutual floggings you received, the scrapes in which you were both involved, and the feuds in which you made common cause, I cannot help thinking that it is somewhat impertinent to the public at large to thrust such narratives upon it. Grant that Thomson was a hero, Simpson a pickle, and Jackson an unmitigated bully—what does the public know or care about Thomson, Simpson, or Jackson? They were simply notorieties—good, bad, or indifferent—of the class to which you belonged; but in the great world that lies beyond both school and university they made no figure, and you know not what has become of them. Surely they are not fitting subjects for biographical reminiscence; and wherefore should you expose the failings of a pedagogue, whose temper you sorely tried; who set you down with considerable show of reason as an impene-

trable blockhead ; and who, in inflicting chastisement for your dulness, merely followed the recognised and ancient traditions of his tribe ? For my part, looking back to my early years, I can discern nothing in my school life worthy of being narrated ; nor do my first university experiences suggest any important memorabilia. Like most Scottish students of the time, I acquired a good knowledge of Latin, a smattering of Greek, and a considerable stock of general information, increased by private reading of a desultory kind, which was of far more use to me afterwards than anything I learned in the schools. My uncle's library was but a poor one ; but in it I found the plays of Shakespeare, Anderson's edition of the British Poets, the works of the elder novelists, and the histories of Hume and Gibbon. These I perused with absorbing interest, to the neglect, I must confess, of the mathematical and metaphysical treatises which ought to have engrossed my attention ; but on that account I cannot truthfully say that I have any tears to shed. I never took kindly to mathematics ; partly because the practical use of that study was not explained to me, and partly because I could see nothing in it to interest the imagination. Metaphysics I detested. The science appeared to me an elaborate diabolical invention for mystifying what was clear, and confounding what was intelligible. In chemistry I made some progress, and would have made more, but for the occurrence of an accident which fairly cured me of the passion for experiment. It so happened that at college I had an especial chum,

Willie Menelaws, with whom I was inseparably leagued. Whether in mischief or in study, we went together; and bore each other's burdens, though these were not very heavy, with a fidelity that might have done honour to Damon and Pythias. Willie never hesitated to accept responsibility for my literary squibs, which sometimes excited the wrath of the students against whom they were directed; and I, in return, stood between him and the parental anger in the matter of certain abstracted bell-pulls which had given rise to a serious inquiry. We both commenced the study of chemistry with great zeal, and went through the preliminary stages of fabricating coal-gas in tobacco-pipes; destroying silver-spoons by rubbing them with mercury (which metal we obtained by smashing an ancient barometer); and smearing the walls with phosphorus—an operation which very nearly deprived the unfortunate Peggie M'Craw of her wits. Then, in the hope of seducing the lightning from the clouds, we constructed a kite with a wire in the string, after the manner of Franklin, but somehow it would not fly; and we tried to make caustic, by steeping a shilling in nitric acid, the result of which was, that our fingers became as black as the claws of an ourang-outang. It was God's mercy that we did not get the length of fulminating powder, else assuredly we should have been blown to smithereens. That consummation, however, we were very near attaining otherwise, and it took place after this fashion.

I had discovered in an attic some old-fashioned ap-

paratus which my uncle had laid aside—troughs, jars, syphons, and suchlike, which I regarded as an inestimable treasure ; and these were forthwith removed to a room on the ground-floor which I occupied as a kind of study. We had previously tried our hands at making oxygen gas, but had failed for lack of implements. We now determined to essay the production of hydrogen, and having procured the necessary materials, we arranged our whole stock of glass, so that the gas from the retort might, after passing through various receptacles, be at last lodged in a huge bell-shaped jar, surmounted by a brass stop-cock, which was the pride of our collection. Nothing could have succeeded better. The gas was generated, bubbled up through the water, and very soon reached the jar, as we discovered by the nauseous odour of its escape.

“Now then, Willie,” said I, “suppose we apply a light, and see how it burns.”

We did so ; and a pale-blue jet whizzed up, upon which we gazed with the delight of a couple of Ghebers ; but our adoration was uncommonly brief, for a minute could hardly have elapsed before the flame waxed dim, buzzed like an infuriated wasp, descended into the jar, and a tremendous explosion followed, which dashed both of us to the ground.

“Willie, man !” said I, recovering myself so far as to sit upon my rump, and extracting a piece of glass from my cheek, which bled profusely—“Willie, man ! are ye killed ?”

“No, I don’t think I am,” said Willie, scrambling

to his feet ; “ but Lord’s-sake, Norman, bear a hand with the water-jug ! Fling it over me—fling it over my legs ; for the acid has burned through my breeches, and I feel it biting in my flesh ! ”

“ O Willie, what am I to do ? The jug’s empty ! ”

“ Take me out to the pump ! take me out to the pump ! ” roared Willie, “ or I’ll be as raw as a skinned rabbit ! ”

“ His presence be wi’ us ! What’s this o’t, lads ? ” cried Nurse Osett, rushing into the room, greatly alarmed, as she might well be, for the explosion was violent enough to shatter several of the window-panes ; “ surely ye’ve no been trying to raise the deevil ? ”

“ The pump ! the pump ! ” screamed Willie, and accordingly we conveyed him thither, where copious libations diluted the acid, and saved my friend from serious consequences, though it was a month and more before he could walk to lecture, without betraying, by an absurd waddle, the temporary loss of his cuticle. On investigating the apartment, we found that we had great reason to be thankful for our escape with so little damage. The brass stop-cock had been driven an inch and a half into the plaster of the wall, in a direction which showed that it must have passed close by the head of my companion ; the carpet, fortunately not a new one, was utterly destroyed ; and an old hat that hung upon a peg was cut through by splinters of the apparatus, as clean as could have been effected by the bursting of a hand-grenade.

I confess that this catastrophe quite damped my

ardour in the pursuit of chemical science. I had no intention of adopting the medical profession, and therefore did not judge it necessary to expend my limited pocket-money or endanger my life in making further investigations as to the qualities of explosive gas; and perhaps it was fortunate that I did so, for, in little more than a year afterwards, my beloved Willie suffered a far more serious loss than that of his epidermis, a finger and a thumb having been blown away by the explosion of an infernal machine, called, I think, a "Papin's Digester."

But I must not linger over these educationary reminiscences. Fortune, which had not smiled on me at my birth, gave me a partial respite throughout the years which are really the most valuable; because the career of every man depends upon the impressions he receives, and the aspirations he forms, during the period of his pupilarity. But it was so ordained that I was again to be thrown upon my own resources, at an age when individual exertion must necessarily be of slight appreciable value.

From the sketch I have already given of my uncle's character and habits, it will readily be understood that he was anything but a prosperous man. That he did not pass from this world to the next, leaving a large amount of debt behind him, was, I verily believe, owing to the circumstance that nobody would give him credit. I do not mean to imply that my uncle was extravagant; on the contrary, his wants were few and his tastes simple; but he was one of those easy-

minded people, who are marked out by nature as the ready victims of imposture. His ear and purse were equally open to every tale of distress, however suspicious it might be ; and as from indolence, which was his besetting sin, he never instituted any inquiry into the character of the persons whom he relieved, he was systematically swindled by a gang of miscreants who lived in comparative luxury upon the abuse of charity.

I remember one notable instance of imposture, the mention of which may be useful to those tender-hearted persons who, like Dr Buchanan, are addicted to indiscriminate alms-giving. A tall, forbidding female, attired in rusty black, was in the habit of way-laying my uncle. She represented herself as the daughter of an old missionary belonging to the Independent Church, who, worn out with years and hard labour, could no longer earn a livelihood, and for whom no provision had been made. This woman told her story with a kind of rude eloquence that was almost touching, and so enlisted the sympathies of the Doctor that he gave her a weekly subsidy. On one occasion I happened to be in the room when the offspring of the minister appeared, and it struck me that she brought with her a peculiarly strong odour as if of alcohol. Her step, too, was rather unsteady, and her language incoherent ; and though she contrived to mumble out several texts of Scripture without verbal error, their application was by no means evident. In short, the woman was intoxicated. I contrived to make my uncle see this ; and for once he got into a regular passion and put her to

the door. About three weeks elapsed before she reappeared; but one evening, when we were sitting at tea, the bell was rung violently, there was a scuffle in the passage, and in rushed the woman, sobbing hysterically, and waving a dirty white handkerchief. Down she flounced on her knees before my uncle.

“He’s gasping! he’s gasping! Gi’e me money, gi’e me money—he’s gasping!”

“Gasping! who’s gasping?” said the Doctor completely taken aback. “Get up, woman!”

“No till ye gi’e me money! he’s gasping!” roared the woman; “O sir, its my feyther, my puir feyther! The auld man’s in the dead-thraw, and I haena aught to gi’e him. O, for God’s sake, sir, hae mercy on me! Is he to gang oot o’ the world less cared for than a cat, and him a minister of the Gospel?”

“Bless me! that’s very distressing,” said my uncle; “wait, my good woman, till I get my hat, and I’ll go with you and see him.”

“Dinna fash yoursel’—O dinna fash yoursel’ to do that!” cried the woman; “there’s twa doctors wi’ him already. But as ye wad win a blessing frae the Lord, gie me something to buy him a cordial and a blanket. It’s a sair thing to see a preacher o’ the Word lying on the bare buirds in this cauld weather, and no a spunk o’ fire to warm his deein’ taes!”

“Poor woman!” said the compassionate Doctor; “I am really very sorry for you. A sad, sad case! Here—take this pound-note, and get him what the doctors order.”

“The blessing o’ the pair be upon ye ! may ye see His face in Jerusalem !” shrieked the woman, clutching the note, and rushing distractedly to the door.

“Poverty and riches,” said my uncle, musingly, as he put in his cup for a second supply of tea—“Poverty and riches undoubtedly are only relative terms, and have no clear significance except by way of comparison. I am not rich certainly ; but how can I call myself poor, when I know that I have a comfortable house to dwell in, with food and clothing, whilst this old man, who has led the life of an evangelist, is passing away in cold wretchedness and neglect ? Ah, Norman, my boy, it is well for us to know and feel that there is no true happiness here !”

“Have you ever seen the old man, sir ?” said I.

“Never. But from his daughter’s account he must be an excellent creature,—a worthy old soul. It is an infamous shame and scandal that those Independents, as they call themselves, should abandon their preachers when they are no longer fit for the pulpit ! I would not speak to a man who used his worn-out horse so cruelly.”

“But are you quite sure, sir, that the woman’s story is a true one ? You remember how drunk she was when she came here last.”

“Bless me ! so she was,” said the Doctor ; “you’re quite right, Norman ; I recollect it perfectly now—she was very drunk indeed ! Ah, it’s a sad thing that drink ! But it’s the way with most of them.”

“Surely not with ministers’ daughters, sir ?”

“Why, no—that *does* make a difference, to be sure.”

“And to speak plainly, sir ; I am not certain that the woman was altogether sober just now.”

“Fie, Norman ! that’s not right. I don’t like to see a young man so suspicious. It would be a monstrous thing if she were wasting money on drink when her father is dying of want !”

“But we don’t know that he is dying, sir ; nay, we don’t know if there is any father in the case,” said I ; “I verily believe that the woman is a regular cheat and vagabond ; and were I you, sir, I would give her nothing more without making proper inquiry.”

My uncle scratched his ear, as was his habit when perplexed.

“I wish you had not put this into my head, Norman ! It makes me very uneasy. I don’t like to think ill of human nature, but I don’t like to be cheated either ; and pound-notes are not so plenty with me that I can afford to throw them away. Give me some more tea. Hang the woman ! If it be as you think, she ought to be whipped at a cart’s tail.”

He was not left long in doubt ; for next day, back came the woman, and, as usual, dropped upon her knees.

“He’s deid ! he’s deid ! my feyther’s deid and gane !” she cried. “He swarfed awa’ at three o’clock in the mornin’, and his last word was a blessin’ for you. And now I maun get him kisted and laid in the grave, and hoo am I to do that when I haena a bawbee to mysel’?”

“Had you not better apply to the parish ?” said my uncle.

“The parish!” cried she with a howl of indignation—“the parish, did ye say? A bonny thing it wad be if a minister o’ the Gospel, belonging to the Independent persuasion, was to be pit into the grund by the parish like a common gangrel! Na, na! nane o’ yer parishes for me! I wad wark my fingers aff, but I wad hae him buried decently, only I hae nae time.”

“Really, I don’t see what else you can do,” said my uncle. “You don’t expect me to bury him, surely?”

“Lord kens what I expect; for I’m a puir distracted woman—a weak orphan without a freend in the warld but yersel’, and a kind freend ye’ve-been to me and to him that’s awa’! ‘Jess,’ said he to me, no ten minutes afore he was removed,—‘Jess, my bonny bairn, dinna greet for me. I hae naething to leave ye, but Doctor Buwhannan will no let ye starve: ye’ll tell him that the auld man left him his blessing, and that I wad like to be laid in the Greyfriars, and that he is no to put oot muckle siller——’”

“Woman!” cried my uncle, “this is perfectly intolerable! There’s half-a-crown for you,—go about your business, and never let me see your face again!”

“Half-a-crown!” screamed Miss Jess, at the top of her voice. “What am I to do wi’ half-a-crown? As gude offer me a penny! Half-a-crown will no bury my feyther.”

“Bury him or not, ’tis all you get from me, so go about your business.”

“Eh, man, but ye hae a hard heart!” said Jess. “It’s easy to be seen that ye’re nane o’ the Lord’s

lenders! But I'se awa' hame; and maybe ye'll no sleep the sounder this nicht for having turned yer back on the orphan!"

Determined to unravel the mystery, I followed Miss Jess. She ascended the Canongate with rapid strides until she reached the shop of a well-known spirit-dealer, which she entered; and after a brief space, emerged with a bottle in her hand. A little further up she turned into a close, and ascended a stair, unconscious that I was at her heels. After several spiral windings, she entered an apartment, the door of which was open, so that I could see the company. Sitting at the table with a pewter measure before him, was an old grey-haired man, whom I conjectured to be the defunct Independent minister, smoking a pipe. By him was seated a dirty shabby-genteel vagabond, evidently of the Jewish race, supported by a brace of unmistakable High Street harlots. To this worshipful company entered Miss Jess. I could not hear the commencement of her explanation, but the conclusion was perfectly satisfactory, — "I couldna get mair out o' the auld fule than half-a-crown. I tried it hard on him, but he's getting camsteary. Ony hoo, we've whisky eneuch for ae nicht; and noo, feyther, we'll drink your dirgie!"

That is but one instance out of many in which my uncle was made the victim of low imposture; but I fear he suffered more severely from swindlers of another sort. Few men attain middle age without being waited on by former class-fellows—men whom they

have known in their youth ; who, by their own showing, have been ruined by the villany of designing scoundrels. Sometimes the applicant wishes to have the loan of a hundred pounds or so, in order to repurchase, for the benefit of his children, some property which he had been compelled to part with ridiculously under its value. Sometimes he merely desires the advance of a small sum for an exigency in business,—for he is always engaged in some kind of business,—and this he will repay, with thanks, in less than a couple of months. My poor uncle was, I must needs say, unfortunate in his class-fellows ; for I know not how many of them availed themselves of his purse, but I know very well that no man ever paid him back. But the worst leech of all was a plausible oily rogue, whom I instinctively hated from the first moment I saw him—a smiling, obsequious rascal, who had always some scheme on hand, by which a man might, through moderate investment, secure an ample fortune. My uncle listened, and, as a matter of course, was taken in. I ought to speak of him reverently and tenderly, for it is my firm conviction that he cared little about money for his own sake, and only wished to have it in order that he might make a comfortable provision for myself. It is sad to think that the best, the kindest, and the most single-hearted of men should be destined, from their high and noble qualities, to be made the prey of the meanest and most despicable of creation.

Dr Buchanan partook in some degree of that delicacy of constitution which brought my poor mother to an

early grave. He had indeed outlived the age when consumptive symptoms are usually manifested ; but in many respects his mode of life was not conducive to longevity. He took but little exercise, and was too abstemious for a man of his spare habit of body. Total abstinence is an excellent thing for your plethoric, pot-bellied fellows, who have a tendency of blood to the head ; but it does not suit the lean and meagre, who absolutely require a stimulant to promote circulation and assist the digestive organs. I remember perfectly the circumstances to which I must attribute my uncle's death. It was a November night. The weather had been remarkably changeable, varying from frost to fog, and from fog to heavy rain ; and as we sat together in the little drawing room, the sound upon the cupola announced a perfect deluge. In the midst of this, and while we were congratulating ourselves upon being warmly and safely housed, a knock was heard at the door, and a message was brought in to the effect that a poor woman in the Pleasance, an old servant of the Doctor, was in the pangs of labour, and that she entreated his assistance. Albeit not in the obstetric line, my uncle, who, I verily believe, would, if desired, have gone any distance to relieve the sufferings of a fellow-creature, put on his great-coat, and, resisting all entreaties that he would tarry for a hackney-coach, which could not then have been procured without a great loss of time, sallied out in one of the worst nights which Edinburgh, infamous for such exhibitions, could display. I believe that he was thoroughly soaked

before he reached the Pleasance ; and, the case being a critical one, he did not return home until an early hour next morning. The result was a severe cold and cough, in spite of which he continued to lecture for several days, until the effort became too great for him, and then he took to his bed, murmuring at the misfortune which prevented him from discharging his duty to his class. As his lectures were for the most part written, and as his assistant was able—which I certainly was not—to exhibit the experimental part, I offered to officiate in his stead ; but he rejected the proposition with something like testiness, declaring that, while the breath was in his body, no man should read his lectures. Of course there was nothing more to be said. Possessed by a sore malady, he lay and fretted himself, and instead of becoming better, he became daily and visibly worse.

Miserable I would have been (notwithstanding the care of Nurse Osett, who tended the sick man, night and day, with a pure affectionate feeling) if no one else had shown an interest in my dying uncle. But he had one friend whom he dearly loved, and who repaid that love by an attachment bordering on devotion. Edward, or Ned Mather, as he was more familiarly called, had inherited a small landed property somewhere in the north, and, I believe, had at one time been a student of law : but his nature recoiled from the drudgery of a profession, for which, he said—I doubt not truly—that he had neither capacity nor inclination. He was a good, kind, simple-hearted soul, totally devoid of ambi-

tion, quite satisfied with an income which was just sufficient to enable him to live in comfort as a bachelor, and to indulge, at the right season of the year, in the sport of angling, the only pursuit for which he manifested any strong propensity. As for settling in life, by which phrase I mean contracting matrimony, that was a notion that never entered into his head. He did not affect the society of ladies, never went to evening parties, and rarely dined out except on the invitation of bachelors like himself. Characters like Ned Mather are by no means uncommon; but, as they make no manner of show, the world overlooks them altogether.

He was a gaunt, grey, elderly man, with an ungainly exterior, but with a heart as tender as that of a woman. He had been at the same school as Dr Buchanan, whom he regarded as an absolute prodigy of learning; and the intimacy so early formed had continued through life unbroken. No sooner did he learn that my uncle was seriously ill than he repaired to his bedside, and watched over him night and day with more than the solicitude of a brother. Honest Ned was a man of few words, and therefore never in the way. He would sit for hours beside his friend as he tossed on the fevered couch, the tears at times forcing their way down his cheeks, for he was quite sensible of the imminence of the danger, which, indeed, the able physician, who attended my uncle, did not attempt to conceal.

At last the crisis came.

“Ned,” said my uncle, feebly, “give me your hand—”

Ned stooped down and kissed his forehead.

“You’ve been a dear friend to me, Ned—God bless you for it. I know I am dying. I have been a great sinner, but I trust in the mercy of God through the atonement of our blessed Redeemer. I may have thought too much about the world, and been impatient under my burden, but I never have forgotten Him, and that makes me easier now.”

Poor Ned tried to say something, but the words stuck in his throat. He was sobbing like a child.

“Norman, my boy, come round here; my eyes are failing. Be a good lad, Norman; be upright, honourable, and true. Keep a clear conscience, and then, though the world should fail you, there’s One above that will not. Ned, my old friend—my heart is sore about this laddie. I’ve made my will—you’ll find it in my desk, Ned—but it’s little I have to leave. Look after him, Ned, and see him put in the way of earning his bread. Now, God bless you both for ever and ever! Turn my face to the wall, Ned, and draw the curtain—so—”

Deeply did I mourn for my uncle. Throughout the years I dwelt beneath his roof, he had treated me with the utmost indulgence and affection, counselling rather than reproving me for any of my juvenile outbreaks, and amply supplying the loss of a father whom I never knew. Wiser men and more prudent there may have been than Dr Buchanan, but I have met with none kindlier of heart or more purely honourable than he was.

When the funeral was over, Mr Mather entered upon

the discharge of his duties as executor, but the task was a very simple one. The house in St John Street and the furniture were left to me, but beyond that there was nothing. A policy of insurance indeed there was, effected some years back with the Vulture office; but unfortunately the last premium, which fell due about the time my uncle was taken ill, had not been paid, so that the benefit of the insurance was forfeited. After some deliberation it was determined that the house should be sold, and that I and Nurse Osett should go into furnished lodgings, the rent of which, and the estimated expenses of living, my limited means were just sufficient to defray. As to my ulterior destiny, that remained to be settled afterwards; but in the mean time it was thought expedient that I should go into an office, so that I might attain some knowledge of practical business, and moreover commence the necessary obligation of earning, through industry, something for my own support. That is a lesson which cannot be learned too early; and I have often thought that many young men, with good prospects before them, might be saved from premature extravagance and ruin if they were betimes compelled to weigh the difficulty of gaining a shilling against the comparative ease of spending one. Before long an opportunity was afforded; for Mr Shearaway, Writer to the Signet, an old acquaintance of my uncle, hearing of my unfriended position, readily and kindly offered to take me into his establishment. And thus I became a limb of the law, in the subordinate capacity of a clerk.

CHAPTER V.

SCOTTISH POLITICS AS THEY WERE.

I HAVE no hesitation in avowing myself to be a Tory, in the most extended sense of the term. I never liked the name Conservative, which I take to have been invented for the purpose of justifying those deviations from principle which modern statesmen are so prone to commit in the race for political power. Principle is at all times, according to my view, a sacred thing. Expediency, which the Whigs and Peelites have tried hard to elevate to the rank of a morality, is at best but a pretext for abandoning the clear line of duty. It may be very expedient to pick another man's pocket, to shirk payment of a just and lawful debt, or to utter a flagrant falsehood. Sophistry may palliate such matters, or even strive to extenuate them on the ground that they were necessary transactions; but not the less on that account do they stand in direct opposition to the laws of honesty and truth.

Why should I be ashamed of calling myself a Tory, whereas many of the best and wisest men of the last

and preceding generations were proud of the party title? I do not see that it implies the maintenance of any one opinion which a gentleman and man of honour need scruple to avow. As a Tory, I consider myself pledged to the support of the British constitution as by law defined. I stand for hereditary monarchy, a hereditary Chamber of Peers, and a free House of Commons; holding that no better political arrangement could be invented for securing true liberty and wise government to the nation at large. I am for maintaining the established Churches intact, with all their guaranteed rights, privileges, and possessions, believing that Church and State form but one edifice, and must stand or fall together. I look with detestation and abhorrence upon any attempt to alter or innovate these, which I hold to be the fundamental principles of the constitution; and I give my hearty malison to each and all of that malignant gang of democrats and dissenters, either in or out of Parliament, who affect to regard the Sovereign of these realms merely as the chief magistrate, who rail at the House of Lords as an antiquated nuisance, and who denounce the established Churches as remnants of medieval superstition, or as bloated corporations whose revenues ought to be confiscated, and applied to educational or other secular purposes.

But while I make this profession of political faith, I wish to guard myself against being considered either as an advocate of abuses, or an enemy to reforms. Common sense teaches us that all earthly things are

liable to decay. The best built house will, after a certain time, require repairs, in order that its stability may be assured; and in like manner, all institutions of man's device must at certain seasons be revised with a view to preserve their efficiency. Nay, I shall go further than this, and admit that very often not only repairs, but substantial improvements, may be made with great advantage and convenience. It is no principle of Toryism to oppose improvement, though it has suited the purposes of the democrats to insist that such is its aim and object. Blind adherence to party traditions is truly rather a Whig than a Tory attribute; and I deny that reverence for the past must necessarily engender a spirit of hostility to modern invention, or of resistance to schemes for the benefit or amelioration of the people.

It was, I think, old Talleyrand who used to maintain that, in politics, a blunder was less excusable than a crime; and that saying of the heathen of the episcopate, who had sworn more oaths to successive governments of France, regal, republican, consular, and imperial, than he could reckon upon his fingers and his toes, has been applied, not unjustly, to the conduct of the old Tory party in Britain, who, some thirty years ago, were imprudent enough to declare themselves opposed to all reform of the House of Commons. I can perfectly well understand their opposition to the measure which was brought in, and finally carried after a struggle of unexampled acrimony and excitement, because the change thereby made was more sweeping

than the circumstances required ; and, inasmuch as it effected a wholesale and immediate transference of political power from the hands of one class of the community to those of another, partook certainly more of the nature of a revolution than of a reform. But how any reflecting man could conscientiously maintain that no change in the system of the representation of the people was required, utterly baffles my comprehension. I know very well that one generation sees such matters by a very different light from that which was vouchsafed to their predecessors. All new political devices are alarming. We know what is, but we do not know what may be ; and therefore we accept the more cautious alternative, and, as Shakespeare says, are content,

“ Rather to bear the ills we have,
Than rush to others that we know not of.”

Still, making every allowance for alarmist tendencies on the part of men who had marked the rise and spread of Radical and even Republican doctrines, I cannot fathom the reasons through which they arrived at the conviction, that the people, even in a limited and contracted sense of the term, were adequately or justly represented in the old House of Commons. I do not pretend to know much about the representative system of England, and therefore shall say nothing regarding it ; but I cannot imagine anything worse than the old elective law of Scotland, which was really rotten to the core. Under it the possessor of landed property, no matter what its extent might be, was not

qualified to vote in respect thereof, unless he held his lands directly by charter from the Crown. If he held of a subject superior, he had no vote, but the holder of that superiority voted in his stead; so that, in reality, parchment, not land, carried the franchise: and as for the tenantry, they had no more to say in elections than the dumb beasts that fattened on their farms. The burgh electoral system was quite as bad. The corporations were of the closest kind, and were beyond the control of the vast majority of the householders rated within the boundary. It was worth while being a member of a town-council in those days; for as all the burghs, with the exception of Edinburgh, were grouped to return delegates who elected the member for Parliament, there was, in the case of any contest, first, a keen canvass of the councillors of each burgh for the election of a particular delegate, in the course of which canvass not only promises, but substantial considerations, were required as legitimate perquisites of power; and, secondly, there was the weightier matter of persuading the delegates when chosen—in other words, of buying up a bailie or deacon, the price of whom, it was said, was often greater than that of the most beautiful Circassian ever exposed for sale in the slave-markets of Cairo or Constantinople. Yet that was the system which the old Tories thought proper to defend; and for defending which they have brought obloquy on their party name, and made it obnoxious throughout Scotland for well-nigh thirty years. No people have longer memories than the Scots. They were ever

ready to revenge the offences of the fathers upon the children even to the third and fourth generation ; and you cannot to this day persuade them that the young man who was peacefully sucking his coral in the cradle when the reform processions, with bands and banners, were parading the streets of Edinburgh, was not even then a dark and deliberate conspirator against the true liberties of the people.

I certainly was no infant in those days ; but I was not very much of a politician, though I could not help feeling the influences of the general excitement. The respectable legal practitioners into whose office I was admitted, had charge of the political management, on the Whig side, of a large and important county ; and therefore I was early initiated into the mysteries of splitting superiorities, drawing charters, preparing infestments, and all the rest of the costly machinery by means of which some dozens of needy dependants were elevated to the rank of freeholders, and invested with the privilege of voting in lieu of the proprietors of the land. For although votes—that is, superiority qualifications—generally bore a high price in the market, as giving the holders thereof a claim on ministerial patronage and favour, it not unfrequently happened that the number of sellers was greater than that of the buyers, in which case, in order to keep up the preponderancy on the roll, new votes had to be created by the splitting of existing superiorities, and these were given as a kind of bonus for past services to inferior agents, satellites, and understrappers ; due pre-

caution being always taken that, in the event of a closely contested election, they should not be induced to hop over to the opposite party. Such things, however, in spite of all precaution, did occasionally occur ; and therefore it was a great object to select such persons only as could be thoroughly depended on—in other words, men who knew they would be ruined, soul and body, if, on account of any conceivable bribe, they dared to perpetrate a treason.

Such was the political state of Scotland previous to the passing of the Reform Act ; and the more closely it is examined, the more wonderful it will appear that such an anomalous and absurd system should have been tolerated so long. One might suppose that the independent landowners would have been the first to insist upon the recognition of the rights of real property, and to protest against being thus ruthlessly bound by the fetters of despotic parchment. But no. They were used to the system, and they liked it, partly for this reason, that it really cost them nothing. Gentlemen were not then called upon to make a common purse to defray county election expenses. The whole costs were defrayed by the great territorial magnates, who were the direct vassals of the Crown, and who were but too glad in this way to strengthen their family influence. In some counties where the parchment power of some one chief was clearly predominant, there never was an attempt at a contest ; but the culminating Duke, Marquis, or Earl, Whig or Tory as the case might be, put forward his nominee without any kind of obstruction.

In others, however, the two interests were so nearly balanced, that it was absolutely impossible to predict which party should win the day at an approaching election. Legal ingenuity was constantly on the watch to detect flaws in the titles of antagonists, and not less active in creating new votes by stretching parchment to the uttermost. Liferenters in embarrassed circumstances were persecuted by every form of legal torture which the law of Scotland could supply, in order to make them renounce, or at all events flee to a far country, from which they durst not return, even at an election summons. Vacillating old gentlemen, with small means and large families, often found themselves able to procure, at a slight sacrifice of political principle, commissions and cadetships for their sons. In short, every art was used to make proselytes or to rear mushrooms; and in some instances, if common report might be credited, even the sanctity of the law had been violated by audacious and unscrupulous partisans.

The county to which I refer was one of the latter description. In it two great rival houses contended for the rule; and the contest was one of such ancient standing as to have become almost matter of history. In the old times, while Scotland was still an independent kingdom, the house of Carrabas had ever ranged itself in war and council against the house of Grimalkin. This was the more extraordinary, because neither of the families was remarkable for adherence to any one particular side. In fact, it would appear that the sons were for the most part disposed to differ from their

fathers ; so that a Cavalier was almost certain to beget a Covenanter, or *vice versâ*. But the most singular thing was that, notwithstanding this internal vacillation, never by any accident were a Carrabas and a Grimalkin arrayed under the same banner. Dwelling in the same district, they were perpetually at feud, and made a point of ravaging each other's lands whenever they could find an opportunity. Was a Carrabas in favour at court, he instantly accused the Lord of Grimalkin of being privy to some monstrous and unnatural rebellion against his liege sovereign, and solicited letters of fire and sword, so that he might legally raze his vassals, and give the castle of the traitor to the flames. When the wheel of fortune again revolved, and the ruling Grimalkin turned up trumps, he never failed, as in duty bound, to furnish proofs of the disloyalty of Carrabas, and to hint that, if confiscation should follow, various estates belonging to the latter might conveniently be added to the hereditary domains of the trustiest servant of the Crown. Notwithstanding those raids and confiscations, which on the average were pretty equally distributed, both houses prospered ; and when the Union took place, the Marquis of Carrabas and the Earl of Grimalkin were accounted amongst the most influential members of the Scottish Peerage. During the reign of George the First, an attempt was made by some officious friends to put an end to this ill-omened rivalry, which it was thought might in the event of a Jacobite enterprise lead to disastrous consequences, by a matrimonial alliance. There was then a young Marquis of

Carrabas, somewhat gay, thoughtless, and extravagant, no doubt, but by no means a bad sort of fellow if he could be kept from wine, women, and dice, for all which three allurements he had a decided predilection ; and there was also a young Countess of Grimalkin in her own right, slightly deformed, but very strong minded, who adhered to the most rigid tenets of Presbytery, her father, the late Earl, having been an extreme Episcopalian. I am not aware if, in those days, the science of chemistry was so far advanced that the neutralising influence of acids and alkalis had been ascertained ; but human sagacity often anticipates science ; and it seems clear that in this instance the promoters of the union were impressed with the notion that by combining two obnoxious positives, it was possible to obtain one agreeable negative result. These negotiations were so far successful that the marriage took place ; but alas ! they had forgotten to take into account the force of hereditary antipathy. “Put the blood of Grimalkin and Carrabas into one bowl,” said a stout old adherent of Queen Mary, when lying wounded on the field of Langside beside the body of his antagonist, whom he had satisfactorily perforated with his Toledo, “and they will mingle together nae whit better than wine does with lapped milk !” The words of the grim old Baron were prophetic and true. The blood would not mingle, neither would the tempers coalesce. It is said that the young Marquis was less in fault than the Puritan lady, inasmuch as he showed some symptoms of reformation, and tried at least to make himself agreeable ; but the bride relaxed no-

thing of her austerity ; became more sour and solemn than before ; entertained, by way of chaplains, two low-bred Geneva probationers in her household ; and set her face so decidedly against all social intercourse which befitted her rank and station, that she drove the boy Marquis, who, under better management, might have become a good husband and respectable man, into all sorts of dissipation, which brought him to an early grave. He died childless, and his next brother succeeded to the titles and estate. The sour lady was not more prolific. To the intense disgust of her kindred, she married one of the aforesaid probationers, but died shortly afterwards in abortive childbed, leaving her succession open to a cousin, who had declined so low that, when he received tidings of his good fortune, he was actually a non-commissioned officer in the line !

After this unavailing attempt at amalgamation, the families quietly relapsed into their old habits of hostility, tempered, of course, by the altered circumstances of the time. They could no longer, it is true, arm their vassals with sword and spear ; but they armed them with superiorities, and, instead of fighting in the open field, they did battle in the freeholders' court. The eminent legal firm in whose office I was placed—Messrs Meikler, Littlewood, and Shearaway, W.S.—were the family and political agents of the Most Noble Augustus John, Marquis of Carrabas, who, being one of those superb aristocrats who conceive the vulgar earth honoured by the pressure of their soles, belonged to the Whig alliance. The interests of the Right Honourable Adolphus

Duncan, Earl of Grimalkin, were placed under the charge of the equally eminent firm of Butt and Benn, W.S., who had the reputation of being the sharpest conveyancers in the profession, and, of course, were Tories to the backbone. Glorious days were those for the Edinburgh agents — days which, alas! will never return again; and even now, the mere mention of them brings tears into the eyes of many a veteran practitioner. For they had then the practical command and management of a great portion of the landed property of Scotland, the lairds having utterly outrun the constable, and being largely indebted to their *doers* for pecuniary advances, which the latter borrowed from the banks. It was then considered an utter impossibility that a gentleman should be able to manage his own affairs, to collect his rents, or to write the simplest business letter, without the advice or intervention of an agent. Accordingly, what between factor-fees, commission, and business accounts, an enormous per-centage of the rent-roll of Scotland found its way into the pockets of the lawyers; and as they were also in high political trust, it is no wonder that the profession should have been regarded as one of the very best to which an anxious father could devote the energies of his son. I am now speaking of days that have gone by, for since then a vast alteration has taken place. Thrift and economy are now much more practised than heretofore. Men are no longer prone, from mere extravagance and show, to rush headlong into ruin. Country gentlemen of limited means have become aware that of all luxuries that of maintaining

an agent is the most expensive and the least satisfactory ; and they now either manage their own affairs, or procure, at a moderate rate, the assistance of country practitioners,—a most respectable class, which of late years has risen deservedly in the public estimation. I must needs say that, having witnessed this change of custom and manners, I regard it with unmingled satisfaction. It has saved an honourable profession from being utterly overstocked—a danger which once was imminent ; and it has restored to their proper place of efficiency and independence the landed gentry, who at one time seemed destined, by their own folly and imprudence, to lapse into irremediable decay.

Messrs Meikleery, Littlewoo, and Shearaway transacted a very large and profitable business. Of the senior partner, Mr Meikleery, we lads in the office saw little or nothing ; for, being a man in advanced years, he took but very small interest in the ordinary routine, contenting himself with keeping up a sort of honorary and ceremonious correspondence with his principal clients. He belonged to the antiquated class of lawyers, which is now entirely extinct, was extremely courteous in his demeanour, used hair-powder, and was, I believe, the last man who walked the streets of Edinburgh in a snuff-coloured coat, knee-breeches, and silk stockings, and who wore buckles in his shoes. He was a bachelor, very rich, rather penurious, and was chargeable with no frailty beyond an addiction to tawny port. Mr Littlewoo, the second partner, was, in his own opinion, a heaven-born lawyer—an undoubted

legitimate child of the forensic Themis. His genius was too high to condescend to the drudgery of conveying, but he rioted in processes, and was ingenious beyond belief in the discovery of dilatory or peremptory pleas. His memorials for counsel were, in fact, pleadings ready drawn, on which account he was very popular with members of the bar, inasmuch as he saved them a vast amount both of time and trouble. One crook there was indeed in his lot; and that was the bitter reflection, which he ever and anon avowed, that he had sacrificed himself by entering the less conspicuous branch of the legal profession, instead of assuming the barrister's wig and gown. It was, he used to say, a most grievous and aggravating thing that he, to whom no practising advocate in the Parliament House was fit to hold the candle for knowledge of precedents, intimacy with the forms of process, and familiarity with the Acts of Sederunt, should, on account of his father's obstinacy in breeding him a Writer to the Signet, be compelled to place that candle under a bushel. Let him but have the opportunity, and he would very soon convince the world and the bench, that Jamieson, and Jeffrey, and Moncreiff, and the rest of them, about whom folks made such a song, were little better than mere bairns as regarded a thorough knowledge of the practiques. It is proper, however, to observe that the friends of Mr Littlewoo were privately of opinion, that an inveterate stutter with which he was afflicted must have proved a formidable obstacle in the way of his forensic success—an opinion which

was not shaken by the result of divers oratorical efforts made by Mr Littlewoo at the Whig gatherings and banquets, which in those days were rather frequent. Littlewoo was too important a man, and too liberal a dispenser of fees, to be gagged on such occasions ; so, by way of compromise, he was permitted, usually at a late hour of the evening, to propose a favourite toast, which he enunciated in the following manner,—“The fif-fif-freedom of the pe-pe-press, if we ha-have it not, we de-die ;” and as the whole of his harangue was hawked forth in the same manner, accompanied with grotesque facial contortions and pugilistic gesture, it is not surprising that his speeches should be waited for with intense curiosity, and responded to with rapturous plaudits. For the rest, he was a man who stood well in society, and kept a most hospitable board, round which it was the pride of his heart to see gathered the rising members of the Whig bar ; albeit none of them could muster up courage to propose to either of the three Misses Littlewoo, full-blown votaries of the waltz, who were perverse enough to prefer the conversation of the officers from Piershill and the Castle to that of stupid young gentlemen in black, whose talk was of nothing but processes.

The conveyancing department of our office was under the charge of an ancient clerk, who, for a salary of £200, performed more profitable work than any other member of the establishment. Poor old Samuel Grey ! I remember him well ; and so, I dare-say, do many more, who must often have encountered

that venerable figure, plodding, as he daily did, round the Calton Hill, after business hours, for the short walk which formed his only exercise. Grey he was by name, and grey by nature. His complexion was grey, his hair was grey, and his clothes were of that mixture which was then denominated pepper-and-salt. His constant companion was an old grey terrier—a creature which he loved better than anything else upon earth, and which was said originally to have won his affections by the heroic exploit of worrying a large rat, which had found its way into a charter-chest, and, for lack of more succulent food, was devouring an Instrument of Sasine. I see him still as he used to sit in his dingy back-room, the threadbare carpet of which had long lost all trace of its original pattern, at the table lined with cloth once red, but now saturated with dust, and slashed with cuts of the penknife, inflicted by meditative apprentices in the hours of dreary solitude. There sate old Samuel Grey, amidst a parallelogram of japanned and green boxes, with a whole stack of parchments before him, engaged from early morn till dewy eve in noting, pencil-marking, scrolling, and collating, with a diligence that never relaxed, and a patience that never tired; whilst under the table, on the remnant of an ancient rug, lay the grey terrier, with its nose between its forepaws, looking as sagacious as if it too had some kind of knowledge of the mysteries of charters, and only lifting its head with a growl of warning for its master, when some one of us clerks presumed to enter that sanctuary of sheepskin. Poor

old Samuel Grey ! He was found one day dead at his desk, stooping over a charter, which rattled as they took it from his grasp like the last breath of an expiring man.

Mr Shearaway, the junior partner, was my especial patron, and of him I shall only say that, though somewhat quick of temper, he was as thoroughly good-hearted a fellow as ever signed letters of horning. He had charge of the general correspondence and political department, and was considered very nearly, if not altogether, a match for Mr Butt, the noted Tory agent, of whose diplomatic ability and skill in manœuvring the Whigs stood in abject terror. As I had always applied myself with due diligence to whatever work was assigned to me, invented no pretexts for being absent during regular office-hours, and was willing to sit late at times when there was an extra pressure of business, as occurred invariably when an election was impending, I became a decided favourite with Mr Shearaway, who was pleased to confide to old Samuel Grey that he considered me worth any two of the articulated apprentices. "It's my opinion, Mr Grey, that our office is going to the devil—regularly, sir, to the devil ; and I don't know how to stop it. There are those apprentices ; four of them, sir, no less. I can't lay salt upon their tails after nine o'clock at night, though there should be as much work to do as would keep the whole of us till two in the morning. One young gentleman, forsooth, slips away to the theatre, where I doubt he is in no good company. Another

has to attend a meeting of the Speculative or Juridical Society, where he and the like of him talk infernal nonsense, and think they are qualifying themselves for speakers. Speakers, quotha! The less a writer has to do with speaking the better. Young Toddison makes his escape, it's my settled belief, to some tavern or other; for the creature drinks like a trout—I'm sure of that, since I caught him sending out on the sly for soda-water in the forenoon. And as for that whelp, Jamie Littlewoo, who spends half his earnings on lemon-coloured gloves, he absolutely had the audacity, sir, to tell me the other night that he could not stop to copy a paper, because he was engaged to go with his sisters to a ball!"

"If I was you, Mr Shearaway," replied the old clerk, "I wad issue a precept, sir, of the strictest kind, and tak' instruments in the hands of the lads——"

"Pooh! you might as well try to put eels into a quart bottle. They think themselves gentlemen, forsooth, and won't stoop to what they call drudgery. They give sixpences to porters for carrying processes to the Register House instead of tucking them under their arms, strap and all, as I have done a thousand times, and thought myself none the worse for it. I'll tell you what, Mr Grey, that laddie Norman Sinclair is worth the whole kit of them. He does what he is bid, writes a good hand, and never makes a sour face when he is asked to sit up till midnight."

"'Deed, Mr Shearaway," said Samuel, whose good graces I had won, partly through attention to business,

and partly by being kind to his dog, "I agree wi' you that he is a vera fine lad. I would trust him ony day without warrandice expressed or implied; for ye see, sir, he has a natural sense of the reddendo which is due to his superiors, and when that is the case ye may dispense wi' ony further confirmation. As for the other bairns, sir, they are young and wilful, but they'll nae doubt mend in time, and deserve a favourable novodamus. In the meanwhile ye must just jowk and let the jaw gae by; or, to speak mair preecesely, proceed by method of resignation."

"Well, well, Mr Grey," said his superior, "the upshot of the matter is that I shall take young Sinclair with me to Slockendrouth as an assistant. I do not think I could rely on any other of the lads at a time when so much drink is going; and it may perhaps do him good hereafter, for I hear the laddie is but unfriended."

This conversation was detailed to me, on the day after it took place, by the old clerk, under the seal of strict secrecy, and many were the warnings and admonitions which he gave me as to my behaviour on the trying occasion.

"It's an awful thing to think o', Maister Norman, and a shameful' thing to see in a Christian country, no to speak of ane which professes to be under kirk discipline; but the fact is, sir, that well-water never ran sae fast out of a pump, as foreign wine does ower the craigs o' the freeholders at an election. I am nae abstainer mysel', for I can tak' my toddy—and whatfor no?—

wi' a friend on Saturday at e'en, and never tell him that the kettle has gane dry ; but I just perfectly abominate that gusting and guzzling and gulping o' French drink—Lord safe us, it costs a guinea the bottle, whereas a tumbler should just be fourpence ! But ye'll see a' that, and a hantle mair. Ye'll see auld men, with white pows, as drunk as Davy's sow, and young men roaring mad, for they're no used to the fizzing stuff that sets the brain a-low without warming the cockles of the heart, like the kindly barley-bree. Ye'll see a' that—and my advice to ye is to refrain frae the wine-cup a' thegither ; or if ye canna clean win aff, fill up your glass twa-thirds wi' clear water, and your head will be clear and your stamach strang in the morning, when the lave o' them will be sick and disjaskit."

I assured my venerable Mentor that I should take his advice to heart, and be as abstemious as the circumstances would admit ; and thus premonished, I was not surprised to receive, a few days afterwards, an intimation from Mr Shearaway that my services were required at the approaching election which was to take place at the head-burgh of Slockendrouth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GATHERING OF THE FREEHOLDERS.

WE set out from Edinburgh, as I remember, in a barouche and pair, carrying with us a couple of voters—shy cocks, as Mr Shearaway called them—who, by some means or other, had been inveigled over from the Continent which they honoured with their residence, never deigning to tread upon British ground, save on occasions like the present, when all their expenses were paid, in the most handsome manner, by the philanthropic Marquis of Carrabas. We took with us a basket of provisions, specially intended for the refecton of these gentlemen, lest they should grow faint by the way ; the roadside inns of Scotland not being, in those days, remarkable for the quality of their provant, which was usually limited, unless previous orders had been issued, to oatcakes, stubborn cheese, whisky, and strong ale—articles of diet rather repugnant to men who had been accustomed to the French *cuisine*. I cannot conscientiously say that the conversation of our companions was either edifying or agreeable. They were, as I had been

given to understand, men of family, who had either missed the world, as the phrase is, or outraged it, so as to throw them beyond the circle of their immediate connections; but for all that they had not abated a jot in their pretensions, but talked big as if they were grandees of the first water, interchanged smutty anecdotes, and addressed Mr Shearaway, who was quite their equal by birth, and twenty times their superior in education and intelligence, with a supercilious impertinence which undoubtedly would have ruffled the temper of any one but an electioneering agent. But Mr Shearaway, being thoroughly up to his business, and having no regard to anything but the success of his actual employer, took no notice whatever of their inuendoes; indeed I verily believe that, if necessary, he would have driven the Author of all Evil to the poll with the utmost *sang froid*, and without concerning himself the least with the character or conversation of his companion.

We proceeded quietly and leisurely enough until we reached the limits of the contested county, where, at the first toll-bar, four horses, with postilions figged out with blue and yellow colours, were in waiting. Thereafter it was a regular tear over moorland and through village, the brilliant appearance of the equipage calling out the unemployed handloom weavers, black fishers, and other *elite* of the communities; along with the children, whose political education, it appeared, had been well attended to, whatever pains might have been bestowed upon more rudimental subjects. It is curious to remark the instinct of viviparous creatures. The

captured shark, hauled upon deck, is cut up, and the young ones which issue from its womb give their first token of existence by snapping at the fingers of the sailors. Slay a she-adder, and the fangless worms she contains make an impotent attempt to bite. In the year 1810, it is recorded that a vast majority of the children begotten within the liberties of Westminster bore a striking resemblance to the late Sir Francis Burdett; and if John Bright has not so stamped his image in Birmingham, we must conclude that his attractions are inferior to those of the fine old English Baronet. As we happened to be on the popular side, we received, with no small pride, the plaudits of those juvenile politicians. So we whirled on, stage after stage, till we entered Slockendrouth, an unfortunate royal burgh, which the Reform Act has since almost demolished, but then quite a proud place, as head burgh and something more; as radical as the bitterest enemy of the constitution could desire, and enjoying the worst reputation of any burgh in Scotland.

Our smoking steeds, which had been urged to their utmost so that our entry might be of the most imposing kind, were pulled up with a violence that threw them on their haunches at the door of the Carrabas Arms, above which swung an immense board displaying a shield brilliant as the field of a kaleidoscope, with all manner of heraldic quarterings and emblazonment, which shield was valorously supported by the effigies of what appeared to be two enormous red tom-cats, with the terrible motto beneath, "CAVE CARRABAS." Our

arrival was greeted by the cheers of some hundred marvellously ill-favoured fellows in fustian and otherwise, all practical opponents of the soap-duty, who, having nothing else to do, had stationed themselves round the door of the hostelry, bawling vociferously as each fresh carriage containing voters drove up, and deriving refreshment from occasional drams out of the Carrabas alcoholic fountain, and a succession of spirited patriotic harangues delivered from an upper window by the editor of a radical newspaper, who was an independent freeholder, and had a turn for mob oratory.

Within the house all was bustle and confusion ; indeed it was marvellous to me how so many people could be packed within so limited a space. The largest room was laid out for dinner, the hour for which was now approaching, and therefore was kept tolerably clear : but from every other apartment you heard the popping of corks, the purling of liquor, and the hilarious laughter of the company—sure signs that the saturnalia commenced in the forenoon was likely to be carried on at least to “the wee hour ayont the twal.”

The entrance of Mr Shearaway, whose talents as a political Mephistopheles were well known and appreciated, was hailed with a burst of delight.

“Devilish glad to see you at last, Shearaway ! Everything sure to go right now,” gobbled the Honourable Sholto Linklater, a thick-set young gentleman with bushy whiskers, who was the selected Whig candidate. I should explain that none of the younger scions of the house of Carrabas, all of them being in their mi-

nority, could be put forward ; so that, after some dubiety and hesitation, for two or three gentlemen were ambitious of the honour, it was determined that the family interest should be exerted in favour of the Honourable Sholto, whose father, an impoverished Baron, was distantly related to the Marquis.

“ I am constrained to acknowledge,” said a very pompous old red-faced individual, Sir Gilbert Mount-hooly of that Ilk, who, on the strength of having been in his youth an unpaid *attaché* to some third-rate embassy, always affected to speak the language of diplomacy, or rather of circumlocution—“ I am constrained to acknowledge that the arrival of so able a negotiator as Mr Shearaway at this critical juncture of affairs appears to me to justify the anticipations which even the least sanguine of this honourable company have been led, with sufficient reason, I cannot doubt, to entertain ; and that by his experienced assistance, the ship”—here the Baronet ceremoniously bowed to the Honourable Sholto—who, by the way, bore very little resemblance to anything connected with a ship, except the figure-head of the Jolly Bacchus—“ may be wafted by the breeze of popular opinion into the haven of deserved success.”

“ Shearaway, man, how’s a’ wi’ you ?” said a rough-and-ready laird from an outlying district of the county, almost dislocating, in the warmth of his greeting, the joints of my excellent superior ; “ O, but I’m blythe to see you ! Winna we gie thae Tory chields their kail through the reek to-morrow ? ”

“Mr Shearaway, will you take anything to drink?” was the more practical suggestion of divers friendly freeholders. But the wise negotiator, blandly declining the proffered courtesy, made his way as rapidly as he could to an upper chamber, where the local agents, who had hitherto been kept (with extreme difficulty) on a limited allowance of potables, were assembled, waiting for his advent, and, as previously instructed, ready to tender their reports. For myself, as it was the first time that I ever had been thrown into such a Babel, and as I then had a kind of superstitious awe for Honourables and Baronets, which I need hardly say has long since departed from me, I felt very nervous, and followed my employer close, as a timid setter cleaves to the heels of the sportsman when passing through a herd of cattle. But I was not yet to be admitted to the sanctum. Mr Shearaway, who really was a considerate and thoroughly good-natured man, saw my perplexity, and was kind enough to relieve it. He paused for a moment, and casting his eye round the throng, beckoned to an obese and somewhat plethoric individual, whom he hailed by the name of Bailie M'Chappie, and who was evidently none of the grandees.

“Bailie,” said he, “I need not tell you—for you're used to this kind of work—that every man must make himself useful at election time. Now here's a young gentleman, Mr Sinclair, my confidential clerk, whom I cannot take with me, for reasons ye may well divine. Young folks must bide a wee before they are let far ben, as nobody kens better than yoursel', Bailie.”

Here the civic dignitary intimated his acquiescence in the sentiment by laying a finger to his rubicund nose.

“Well, then, you’ll oblige me, and lay our party under a great obligation, if you’ll take charge of him for to-night, for I’ve more on my hands than I can well go through with. Mind ye, he will be wanted to-morrow, so I depend upon you to see that he does not exceed—to do the callant justice, he’s very steady. I would be loth to interfere with you, but this is a particular case, and I ken it is very long before you are brought to see double. Just look after the lad.”

“Say nae mair—say nae mair, Mr Shearaway,” replied Mr M’Chappie, “I’ve put it on my conscience that he gets nae harm to-night, and is as fresh the morn as a daisy. I winna just promise that I’ll gae to bed mysel’ before the party breaks up, for somebody maun be there to keep order; but this ye may rely on, that I’ll see the laddie atween the sheets, as douce and sober as a lamb, afore the auld Laird o’ Stoupiewa’s volunteers a sang, and that, as I ken weel, will be when the kirk clock o’ Slockendrouth chaps eleven. Stoupiewa’s aye keeps time. Dinna be afeared about the laddie, ye may trust to me to look after him.”

“My man,” said the Bailie, after a pause, during which he honoured me with a stolid survey, and fed his nose with a copious pinch of black rappee, “ye hae heard what Mr Shearaway said; and as I have in some measure the guidance of you, I’m thinking it will be best for you and me to take a bit walk till dinner be

ready. There's mair temptation in this house than is gude for a young lad like you, and were I to leave you by your lane, some of thae deil's buckies wad be leading you astray. Sae," continued he, striding to the sideboard, and helping himself to a glass of liquor which looked suspiciously like brandy, "here is your vera good health, and now we may as weel be stepping."

I had no objection to offer to this proposition ; indeed, I was heartily glad to escape from the din and somewhat stifling atmosphere of the inn, and was, moreover, desirous to see a little of the popular stir which always prevails on the eve of an election. It was quite evident, as we proceeded, that all ordinary business was at a stand-still. The whole population, in a state of excitement, was wandering about the streets ; and in front of the Masonic Hotel, where the Tories had established their headquarters, a vast crowd was collected, yelling with hideous dissonance at each fresh arrival that augmented the ranks of the obnoxious party. No actual violence, however, was attempted, nor were any missiles thrown ; an abstinence which, I afterwards learned, was mainly attributable to the precautions taken by the sheriff of the county, who, in anticipation of an outbreak, had secured the assistance of a military force ; and it was quite well known throughout Slockendrouth that a party of dragoons was quartered in a neighbouring village. I could not help remarking that Mr M'Chappie, so far from being gratified by the sounds of disapprobation which were cast at his political opponents, appeared to be vexed and

ruffled ; for in reply to some remark of mine touching the evident sympathies of the populace, he said dryly,

“Ay, ay—it’s a’ vera weel ! Nae doubt it’s better to hae sic-like folk cheering you, than to be pelted by them wi’ stanes ; but for a’ that they are no to be lippeden to. It’s true enough that they are for us the day, for we are against the Tories, and the Tories rade in the rigging ; and they expeck that we shall gie them Reform and the big loaf, and double wages, and may be something mair. Nae doubt they will get Reform of Parliament, for that’s a settled thing ; but the taxes will be just as heavy after that as they are now ; or if they are made lighter, there will still be as muckle grumbling as ever ; and if ever the Whigs get the upper hand, as doubtless they will before lang, you’ll see the mob as bitter at them as they are this day at the Tories. They speak about the people governing themselfs. Lord help them ! If by the people they mean the weavers o’ Slockendrouth and sic-like, a bonny government it wad be ! I’m an auld man now, and I hae seen something o’ the world, and my belief is that the Tories are no sae bad as they are called, and the Whigs no sae good as they aye pretend to be. There are some o’ the best gentlemen in the country, and the kindest to their tenantry, down yonder at the Mason’s Arms ; and it’s no a right thing that they should be hooted at by a parcel o’ blackguards, ilk ane o’ whom, if he had his deserts, wad get aff cheap wi’ a month on the tread mill.”

I was hardly prepared for this outburst of senti-

ment on the part of the Bailie, and, I supposed, betrayed some surprise in my countenance, for he continued :—

“ Maybe, Maister Sinclair, ye wonder to hear an auld Reformer speaking that way ; for an auld Reformer I am, and will be to the end o’ the chapter. The Tories are no wise in their ain generation, for they hae ridden the country wi’ ower tight a curb, and they dinna see that a new order o’ things has risen up amongst us. It’s trade, sir—trade and commerce that has made this country what it is, and will make it greater yet ; and it’s no to be supposed that the men who make the country’s wealth will submit to be keepit out o’ the country’s government. The lairds hae held their heads ower high, pretending to look down upon us citizens, because we dinna blaw about a pedigree, which is dead men’s names ; or as if the possession of a wheen ill-wrought acres, that brings up mair dockens than wheat, was better than bank shares, money in the Funds, or may be heritable securities. I dinna pretend to greatness, but there is ane of our lairds who wadna thole to be seen walking wi’ the like o’ me on the plainstanes, that I could roup out o’ house and hame, if it were my pleasure to gie the word. It’s no the land that will rule the roast now-adays, nor the lawyers either ; and that will be seen afore lang. But for a’ that we canna want the land, and we canna want the law ; and a’ that I seek—and it wad be better for them if they did it o’ their ain free-will—is that the gentry would tak’ down their

pride a peg or twa, and consort wi' us townsfolk, and that we should be a' ae man's bairns. But it will never do to let the seum get to the top o' the kettle. Na, na! I'm for nane o' your mob-rule, or Radical ascendancy. I hae seen enough o' that already to serve me for the rest o' my born days."

I expressed my curiosity to know what the experiences were which had made so marked an impression on the respectable Mr M'Chappie; and he, no doubt pleased at having an auditor entirely to himself, gave vent to the following narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BAILIE'S VISIT TO PARIS.

“ YE maun understand, my lad, that it was no much farther back than a year ago, about the middle o’ the summer, when it was minted that there was to be an election in the county ; sae there was the usual stramash and hurry, folks riding and running, agents working day and night, and promises fleein’ about among the voters as fast as doos in a field o’ pease. Nae doubt our friend Mr Shearaway was in the very thick of it ; for he’s a lang-headed chield, and a canny ; and that empty bladder, the Marquis, wad be sair put to it without him. Weel, sir, ae night as I was sitting down quietly to my supper—for I aye like to hae something tasty, such as a Welsh rabbit or a Finnan haddock, before I mix my tumbler—up rattles a post-chaise to my door, bang goes the knocker, and in comes the lass wi’ a letter from Mr Shearaway, telling me that I was wanted instantly in Edinburgh on important business, and that I wasna to lose an hour in coming. I was unco laith to move, for it’s enough to

try the patience of a saint to be disturbed at supper-time ; but needs must when the deil drives, and the deil is aye great at elections ; sae I telled them to put up a change o' things in a sma' poekmanty—for I had a kind o' a misgiving that I mightna get hame sae soon as I could wish—took a hasty mouthfu' and a dram, and stepped into the post-chaise.

“Awa' I whisks to Edinburgh, sleeping as I best could the hale road, never stopping but for ten minutes at Whitburn, where the whisky was awfu' bad, the fire out, and nae loaf-sugar in the house. It was early day when I got to Edinburgh ; but early as it was, there I fand Mr Shearaway up and busy as a bee. My certie ! he's no the man to let grass grow at his heels.

“ ‘Come awa', Bailie,' says he, ‘I hae a bit job for you ayont the ordinar. It's a kittle cast, but you're the man to do it.’

“ ‘It will be something about the election, nae doubt?' says I.

“ ‘Ye needna be a warlock to guess that,' quoth he, ‘but ye have a warlock's errand before ye ; for, man, ye maun cross the sea.’

“ ‘Where to?' says I—‘to Fife?’

“ ‘Fife!' says he, ‘d'ye think I am sending ye to Cupar? Na, Bailie ; ye maun first to London, and then to Paris.’

“ ‘Paris!' says I ; ‘losh keep us, that's in foreign parts, and in a Papish country ! What would the like o' me do in Paris?’

“ ‘That’s just what I am going to tell you about,’ says he. ‘Auld Dubity of Switherhaugh, who has voted twice on the Grimalkin side, lives in Paris; and there’s something that I ken o’, and that he kens weel, that would render it vera inconvenient for him to show himself in Scotland at this time. I may just hint to ye that it’s a Justiciary matter. Now, we want a discreet man to go over and persuade him that he had better, for his ain sake, bide where he is; and that if he does that, and makes nae words about it, we’ll see whether we canna get a commission for his third son to India. I doubt not that a wink will be as good as a nod to him, for the Switherhaughs were aye a slippery set, but it wadna do to break it to him by a letter. It’s a delicate kind of business, so we have pitched on you as the fittest man to carry it through. The election this time will be a neck-and-neck affair; and, according to my calculation, if we can keep Dubity out of the way, we are sure to win.’

“ ‘But, dear me, Mr Shearaway,’ says I, ‘how am I to win my way to Paris? I canna speak a word o’ French.’

“ ‘Nonsense!’ says he; ‘everybody on the road speaks English. Ye wad be far worse off in Aberdeen. Here are the letters for you, with a note of directions; and there’s a cheque on the Bank of Scotland for your expenses. Ye may spend it all if ye like, for no reckoning will be asked; and if auld Dubity does not appear at the election, there will be a handsome fee forthcoming for your trouble.’

“I took the cheque. It was for a bonny sum—three figures, I can tell you; and what mortal man could resist that? I was to get a trip to foreign parts for naething, with the pleasant prospect of a handsome handsel to boot.

“ ‘I’ll do your bidding, Mr Shearaway,’ says I. ‘And when am I to start?’

“ ‘For London by this afternoon’s steamer,’ says he; ‘and from that to Paris as hard as ye can drive. So good-luck attend ye.’

“ ‘Weel,’ thought I, as I gaed up the Mound to the bank to get the cheque cashed, ‘siller maun be unco plenty amang the Carrabases to gar them spend it in sic gates; but that’s no business o’ mine.’

“ In a word, I got the cash and was aff to London that afternoon. Sair sick I was, to be sure; for the wind was in the eastward, and when we got to a place that they ca’ed Flamborough, I thought that my hail inside wad hae gane into the ocean. But what wi’ nips o’ brandy, and ae thing and anither, I got over the warst of it, arrived in London, and in twa days after that I had landed in France. Here I soon found that Mr Shearaway was clean wrang about the accomplishments of the foreigners. At the very first house I came to, I says to the waiter after dinner—and it was the first word I had spoken, for I just took whatever meat they put down, keeping aye a jealous look that it wasna frogs or sic-like abomination.

“ ‘Lad,’ says I, ‘bring me a tumbler o’ toddy and a ladle.’

“ I wish ye had seen the creature’s face. He was mair like a puzzled cockatoo than a ’sponsible Christian.

“ ‘ Sare,’ says he, ‘ I spike Inglis.’

“ ‘ Spike the deevil,’ says I, ‘ but bring me my todody !’

“ Ye will hardly believe it, but there were twa Englishers there at the *table d’hôte*, as they ca’ it, who didna seem to understand me any better than the Frenchman ; but I made the best fend of it I could with cauld brandy-and-water, and set aff in the diligence, which is the French name for the stage-coach, to Paris. I dinna mind much about the road, except that the wine was sour, and the viviers rather queer ; but I was wakened out of a sound nap by the bawling of a chield they ca’ed the conductor, on the top of the diligence, by which I understood that we were coming near to the great city of Paris. Now, as I had been informed that we would be stopped at the gates for examination of the luggage and siclike, the French folk being sic inveterate smugglers and rogues that a son would cheat his ain father, I thought it right to gather myself up ; ‘ for,’ thinks I, ‘ as linen is scarce in these parts, wha kens but they may take a fancy to my shirts?’ But when we came to the ports, no a soul was there, not even a policeman. They were standing wide open, the guard-house was clean deserted ; and for aught I could see, the great city of Paris might have been as empty as Edinburgh in the hinder end of August, when the grass grows thick in

the squares, and the only living things ye encounter are a wean niffering a bawbee for grosarts wi' an auld woman at a stall. But for a' that, it was evident that something by ordinar was ga'en on inside ; for cannon began to bang, no as our folk fire, regular and precisely, on the King's birth-day, but clap after clap, as if the guns had been double-barrelled, and whiles I thought I could hear a kind of roar, maist terrible and gruesome, like the back-draught of a mighty sea. The French folk that were wi' me in the diligence began to cock their lugs, and to look queer ; and I heard them jabbering to ane anither in a quick, raised, jerky kind o' way : but what it was they said I couldna understand, for I hae nae knowledge o' their parley voos. Weel—on gaed the coach, the sound o' the cannon aye growing louder and louder, and very soon it was mingled with a brattling that I kent to be the discharge of musketry ; and I said to mysel', though I canna assert that I was altogether without misgivings, 'Nae doubt it will be a military review ; and the folk that should hae lookit after the gate will hae gane in to see the ploy !' But, my certie ! it wasna lang afore I fand out my error ; for nae sooner did we turn a corner than the diligence was beset by twa or three hundred black-a-vised scoundrels, maist o' them in blue shirts aboon their other claes ; and in a jiffy they had cut the traces, ta'en away the horses, and signed to us passengers to come out. The Frenchmen that were inside spanged like puddocks out of a pail o' het water, but deil a bit would I budge without my pockmanty.

Then they tried to pu' me out, neck and heels, but I made fecht wi' my umbrella, and gaed a chield a paik below the ribs that doubled him up like a carpenter's rule. Sae they just let me sit where I was, drawing the diligence broadside to the street; and in twa minutes' time they had jammed it in wi' carts, auld barrels filled wi' paving-stanes, and many other kinds o' lumber, sae that a cat could hardly hae cruppen out; and an unco terror came over me, for I thought they were going to bury me alive. But that was a vain imagination; for presently I hears a loud skelloch among the blackguards that were scrambling on the top, and down they slid like spiders; and then I saw, what in the perturbation of my mind I hadna observed at first, that ilka ane o' them had a gun, and a gay wheen o' them baggonets stuck into the muzzle. Now, if there is ae thing I detest mair than anither, it is the sight of a gun, for I have been a peaceful man a' my days, and never handled powther since I was a laddie at school, and burnt my fingers with a pluff; sae ye may weel imagine what was my state o' mind when the vagabonds began to take aim as it were through the windows o' the diligence, and me sitting inside! I looked up the street to see if there was ony chance of escape in that direction, for I felt as if I could have fled for refuge to the uttermost parts of the earth; but what think ye I saw there? Naething less than a hail regiment o' soldiers charging down upon me! I had just time to clap down on the floor, and was beginning to say a bit o' a prayer, when pash gaed ae bullet clean

through the wood-work, and then a perfect volley ; and I fand that I was in the very centre of what they call a barricade, that the soldiers and the mob were fighting, and that I lay between their shots ! How lang that lasted I canna say, for I clean lost my judgment and my senses. I hae a kind o' indistinct recollection that I howled like a pointer dog tied up in a strange stable, and tried to cover myself up wi' the straw that was lying in the bottom o' the coach, but I ken naething mair ; and when I came to mysel' the firing was done, and maist feck o' the mob had disappeared. They telt me afterwards that the soldiers had been defeated at that barricade, and sure enough there were a hantle o' them, pair chields ! lying dead and bloody in the streets ; but I caredna which had the better, sae that I could make my escape out of that accursed coach. Sae, finding that the firing was over, I lifted up my head, and gave a halloo that might be heard the hail length of the Trongate of Glasgow. Presently it was answered ; and after muckle wark, twa ill-looking rogues, wi' knives in their belts, whom I jaloused to be butchers, got the door open, and harled me out. Thankful I was to heaven for that blessed deliverance ; and no a little glad, moreover, to find my poekmanty, though there were nae less than three holes in it. I may tell ye that, afterwards, when I came hame, I found a bullet sticking in ane o' my folded shirts, just at the place where my breast would have been if I had it on, which I could not regard as other than a special providence. But what was I to do next ? I could have found my

way as readily through the great city of Nineveh as through Paris. I couldna speak a word o' French, nor could I make any Frenchman understand me—a' the doors were steeked, and the very window-shutters closed; and nae wonder, for when bullets are fleeing about, the best place for a sensible man is the cellar. Sae I bethought me that I wad apply to the twa men that had helped me out o' the coach; for though my tongue was in a manner useless, and indeed clove to the roof of my mouth, I kent that there was a language common to all mankind, and that is the clink o' siller. Sae, in my haste, I put my hand into my pouch, and pulled out a when franc pieces, that are just like our ain shillings, without observing that there were twa or three coins o' solid gowd amang them; and these I offered to the Frenchmen, signifying at the same time, by thraving my face and pointing wi' my thumb, that I would be glad to be lodged, wi' my pockmanty, in a place where I might be safe, and also get something to drink, for I was amaist choked wi' an awful thirst. Nae sooner did they see the siller than they leugh like mad. 'Ahi!' quo' ane o' them; and he whips up my pockmanty; and the other chield—he was a desperate-looking ruffian that!—takes haud o' me by the arm; and awa' we set, up ae street, and down anither, till we cam' to the maist blackguard bit in a town that I ever saw in my born days. Lord kens, some of the closes in Edinburgh are bad enough, and there are wynds in Glasgow whereof the stench would scunner a sow, but nane o' these were sae fearsome as that back-

court in Paris, the very walls of which seemed to reek with the filthiness of abomination. When I saw it, I felt as if I could have parted wi' my pockmanty to be back again in the broad street where the diligence was; for though bullets are bad, butchers' knives are muckle waur. The ane may not happen to hit, as I kenned by recent experience; but the ither, when applied to a man's thrapple, will go through it as readily as through cheese. In a word, I began to see that I had louped out of the frying-pan into the fire; but I was fairly in the grip of the Philistines, and had nae help for it but to go on.

“They took me into a side-entry, and then half led, half drove me down a stair into a laigh room, wherein there was nae furnishings but three auld chairs and a broken table. A fearfu' den it was, wi' stains on the wa's that might hae been blude; only it was impossible to see clearly, for the only light came through a single pane up near the ceiling, that was as thick incrusted wi' dirt as though it had been smeared wi' treacle. The sight of it made me grue, and I felt as if cauld water had been poured down my back, and a red-hot wire rammed up my spine; for I couldna help thinking of the murder-hole of Burke and Hare. Weel, ane o' the men—he was the lad that carried my pockmanty, and though far frae bonny, wasna just sae ill-looking as his neighbour—signs to me to sit down, which I did; and then he cries out ‘Jean!’ I was hopeful when I heard that, for the warst linner amang the lasses has aye some kind o' human feeling—that is, when a man is

concerned, for they'll no stick at pyking out the e'en of their ain sex—but instead of a lass, in comes an awesome carle wi' red hair and a hunchback, and teeth like the tusks o' a boar. 'It's a' ower wi' me now !' thinks I ; ' Lord forgive me my sins, and Mr Shearaway for sending me on sic a fule's errand ! I might have got some mercy from the other twa, for after they had stripped me to the sark, maybe they wad hae let me gang ; but if ever man was a murderer, it's that red-headed limb o' Satan !'

“ But they didna just proceed to extremities ; for after a deal of jabbering, the man they called Jean gaed out at a back-door, and presently came ben, bearing with him a bottle and twa mugs, at the sight whereof I was somewhat comforted, for it was on my mind that he had gone to look for a hatchet, or some such implement of destruction. Still I did not consider that as equivalent to an assurance of safety to life, but only as a kind o' short reprieve. ' For,' thinks I, ' maist probably they intend to do the job cannily, and without a kick-up ; sae they'll hocus the drink, tie me up in a sack, and when it's dark fling me into the river.' However, to do the loons justice, they didna try to make me drink onything but what they took themsells ; for ane o' them filled the mugs out o' the bottle, and took a good swig of it before I tasted mine. It was a white kind o' wine, unco wersh and fushionless, but no a' thegither unpalatable to a man wha was perishing wi' thirst. Then the man Jean made a sign that I couldna interpret otherwise than as a demand for payment ;

whereupon, thinking it best, under sic circumstances, to be liberal, I tendered him a five-franc piece, but he shook his head, and frowned, as much as to say that it wasna enough, sae I had to gie him another crown, which was an awful price surely for a bottle o' drink no muckle stronger than sma' beer. Wi' that he seemed contented ; sae I, thinking they might maybe let me out now that they had gotten something, raise up, and was about to lift my pockmanty, when ane o' the chields takes me by the twa shouthers, and makes me sit down, pointing to the bottle which was now empty, as much as to say—' Deil a bit o' you stirs frae this house till we hae anither chopin'. What could I do ? They had me fairly at their will, sae I even made a virtue o' necessity, and signed to Jean for a second bottle, which he made nae difficulty about bringing, for it's my notion he had seldom sic a customer ; and I had to gie him ither ten francs, which he pouched wi' a kind o' keckle.

"Weel—that bottle lasted nae time, and I thought they wad be ettling for a third ; but it seems that they had made up their minds to clean me out in another way ; for ane o' them pulls out a pack o' playing-cards—sair dirty they were too—and says something to me about a Jew.

"Jew ?" says I ; ' Na, friend, ye are clean mistaken in that ! I am nae Jew, but a decent Christian frae Slockendrouth, that ye may hae heard tell o' ; and if ye will bring me to ony respectable inn or lodging-house—for I wad be laith if Mr Jean was to have ony mair trouble on my account—I'll gie you and that other

gentleman as muckle wine as ye can drink, or brandy if ye like it better.'

"But I might as weel have read the Proverbs of Solomon to a collie-dog. 'Jewy,' says he: and wi' that he dealt out the cards, and in a manner forced me to tak' up a hand. Then he put down a gold piece on the table—it was ane o' the unlucky coins I had given him amang the siller—and signs to me to do the like. I did sae, for by this time I was growing bauld, and I thought that maybe I might win; and sae I might, had the game been birkie, or catch-the-ten, or ony other I understood; but I kent na what I was about, and just put down the cards ony way, till the chield sings out 'Ahi!' flings down twa honours, and up wi' my Napoleon, as I hae seen a gled whip awa' a robin-redbreast. Neist time he put down twa; and then the conviction came on me that I was to be rooked by the blackguards out o' a' my siller. 'Better that,' thinks I, 'than hae my weazand cut across;' and I played on wi' a kind of air of indifference, as if I didna greatly mind whether I lost or wan, which was the mair easy, because I saw very weel that they wad never stop till a' the money in my pouch, being somewhat aboon ten pound sterling, had gane in the way of ransom. Mair gowd I had, nae doubt, but it was sewed into a belt round my waist, and I was determined that the blackguards shouldna get that till I was brought to the last extremity. They werena long in rooking me—ten minutes sufficed for that—and then I turned my pouches inside out, in token that I had nae money left. Then they pointed to my pockmanty, as

muckle as to say that they had nae objection to play for onything that was in it ; but I let on as if I didna understand them ; and just then there came a sound as if of a rush of people into the court above, and a sort of gathering cry, just like what the Hielandmen used lang syne. The twa chields they started up, and saying something in a hurry to the ill-faured, red-headed tyke, Jean, banged up the stair ; and Jean was about to steek the door, but, my faith, I prevented him ! I'm no a strong man, Maister Sinclair, nor did I ever begin a tulzie ; but I hae a stout Scots heart o' my ain, and I can gar my hand keep my head, if need be, as weel as mony folk that make mair brag about their courage. Besides, I was just desperate-like at the thought of being left in that den of iniquity wi' a manifest murderer ; sae I caught up ane o' the chairs, and as Jean was thraving the key, I took him sic a clour on the pow, that down he fell sprawling like an ox on the floor. I needna tell you that I whippit up my pockmanty, and ran for dear life, kenning naething and caring little where I went to, so that I got clear o' that villanous neighbourhood. Whiles I heard the huzzas o' the mob, and whiles the rattling o' the guns—I heeded naething, but ran clean on, like a roebuck on the bras of Benlmond, till I came to an open street, and nae sooner was I there than I heard the trampling o' horses, and down came a charge of cavalry, full gallop, their sabres glittering in the sun. Ae minute mair, and Mrs M'Chappie might hae been a widow ! But by great good-luck I spied an open entry, and in

I rushed, and up a stair as fast as Tam o' Shanter wi' a' the witches ahint him. There was an auld man in a livery-coat keeking out of a door, but him I sent spinning like a peerie, dashed into a room, where there were three ladies and a gentleman, and flinging my pockmanty on the floor, fell on my knees, and returned thanks to Heaven, wi' a grateful heart, for having saved me from sic terrible dangers. Ye may believe that the ladies got a gliff by my sudden apparition, and the auld man didna look overly pleased ; but when I told them wha I was, and what I had come through, they gave me a hearty welcome ; and nae wonder, for they were a kindly Scots family frae the Stewartry o' Kirkcudbright ; and in foreign lands the Scots aye help ane anither, whereas the Englishers, being a dour and suspicious race, stand aloof from men that speak their ain mither tongue, unless they ken something special about them. Sae I even bided under the same roof with my country-folk till something like order was restored, and a man might venture into the streets without the risk of being shot like a muircock ; but O it was an awesome sight to see that great city in the hands of the mob, lawful authority such as that which is exercised by Provosts and Bailies being overthrown, and the very scum of the population marching about wi' red caps and trees of liberty, and siclike radical gear, in open defiance o' law, and roaring like the bulls o' Bashan ! They have put away their auld king—that's him that's in Holyrood now, and they hae gotton a new one, that's him they ca' Louis Philippe ; but ye'll no

persuade me that he'll keep the crown on his head to the end of his natural days. Na, na! Auce show the cat the road to the kirn, and you may whistle for the cream. Auce gie the mob the upper hand, and they'll never bide quiet. I ken weel that there are grievances in this country of ours, and no light ones either; but the Lord forbid that I should ever see them redressed by the short cut of a revolution. I whiles think it was a great mercy for Scotland that the Covenanters were kept under till King William (that's the Dutchman, ye ken) came over frae Holland; for if the Westland folk had got the better at Bothwell Brig, it wad just have been rank massacre and confiscation, and the country wouldna' now have been what it is, rising every year in rank among the nations. The Tories are clean wrang in refusing reform, but the Whigs will do waur if they let the mob get the uppermost; and I canna see that there is ony sense in drinking sic toasts as 'The people, the source of all legitimate power,' which seems to me a kind of hint that the easiest way of altering the law is by knocking it on the head—no unlike the method I resorted to in the case of my friend Maister Jean, the fracture o' wha's skull, if it was fractured, lies at this day vera light upon my conscience. But it's time we were ganging back to the Carrabas Arms, for it's close upon the hour of dinner."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRELIMINARY BANQUET.

IT is a favourite remark of peptic philosophers, that in Great Britain no important business of any kind can be carried through without a due quota of eating and drinking; and some very erudite persons have traced this habit so far back as the days of our Saxon forefathers. For myself, I am no enemy to banqueting in the abstract; and although I confess that I greatly prefer private to public entertainments, yet I admit that there are certain occasions which are aptly celebrated by the ancient ceremonial of public dining. For example, I highly applaud the custom of holding convivial meetings on the occasion of agricultural shows; for there landlord and tenant, peer and yeoman, are brought together for one evening on a footing of equality; mutual good-will and kindly feelings are fostered, and no element of discord is permitted to mar the harmony of the assemblage. But I cannot conscientiously express my approval of political dinners. They are bad things in every way—bad, because they

tend to promote and keep alive that spirit of sectarianism, which is a besetting temptation to every man of us, both in politics and in religion—bad, because their intention is to repress free thought and independent judgment, by forcing neophytes to adopt the arbitrary shibboleth of a party—bad, because the most forward speakers are commonly either fanatics or knaves—and bad, because the contractor generally takes care that both victuals and drink shall be of the very worst description.

The latter objection, however, did not apply to the entertainment which was prepared for the Whig freeholders at Slockendrouth. The viands and the liquors were both plentiful and unexceptionable; indeed, any indication of economy in the commissariat would have been a perilous political blunder. The parchment gentlemen considered themselves entitled, on such occasions, to be supplied with every delicacy which could be gathered from land or sea, native or foreign, and they would have regarded it as a gross insult if any expense had been spared in the banquet set before them. The voter, whose native taste was in favour of sheep's-head broth, must needs have two helpings of turtle. Haunches of venison from the park of the Carrabas smoked upon the board, and, though greatly inferior to four-year-old mutton, were in request, as Paddy would have phrased it, "just for the honour of the thing." Champagne and Burgundy were as plentiful as ditch-water; while Maraschino and Curaçoa, in straw-covered flasks, went the round of the table—whisky being re-

garded as too vulgar an article for the palates of the distinguished recipients. No flock of cormorants that ever assembled round the carcass of a stranded whale could have gorged themselves with more vigour and determination than did the worthy and patriotic retainers of the house of Carrabas; incessant was the clatter of knife and fork, boisterous the laughter, and fast and frequent the pledge. I was, I must needs acknowledge, somewhat excited by the novelty of the scene, so different from anything I had hitherto witnessed. I was very young, totally inexperienced in the ways of life; and for the first time I found myself treated as a man, and admitted into a company which, though sufficiently miscellaneous, included many individuals of rank and station, with whose names I was already familiar through the medium of the Carrabas chartulary. There was the great mining proprietor, Gibson of Slag, of whom it was commonly reported that he was begotten in the bowels of the earth by his father, who followed the humble calling of a collier, but who rose to be a master and lessee, and by skill, industry, and a double share of shrewdness, had laid the foundation of a princely fortune. There was Alexander Phin, Esq. of Phinstown, famed all over the west for the amplitude of his hospitality and the excellence of his cheer, who began life as a simple snuff-merchant at the corner of the Saltmarket. Then there was Jamie Pitlearie, the noted wag and song-writer, whose facetiæ in those days kept Renfrewshire in a roar, and contributed not a little towards the compila-

tion of that excellent jest-book and treasury of wit yeclaped *The Laird of Logan*, which by many is held in even greater repute than the well-known work to which the honoured but apocryphal name of Joseph Miller is prefixed. These were some of the *Dii minorum gentium*; but we were not without a sprinkling of the higher aristocracy; for besides the Honourable Sholto Linklater and Sir Gilbert Mounthooly, we had two peers' sons, a leash of baronets, an admiral, and a Highland laird, who considered himself incomparably the most important man in the assemblage. Other lairds of the Lowland breed we had in tolerable profusion, from the freeholder of ten thousand a-year who visited at Carrabas Castle, down to the bonnet-laird of one hundred and fifty who caroused with the game-keeper of the Marquis. But the bulk of the party consisted of writers, accountants, and other subordinates; pure paper fictions, as landless as Gregalach, and, in some things, quite as unscrupulous. Our chairman was the great Sir Gilbert, who did the honours with diplomatic suavety, duly drinking wine with those who sat below the salt, and dispensing his courtesies on all hands as beseemed a veteran intriguer.

So soon as the sacred rage of hunger was appeased, Sir Gilbert, after cantering lightly through the ordinary toasts, delivered himself of a couple of short orations as prefaces to the respective sentiments of "The Rights of the People!—may they never be trampled down by the iron heel of tyranny!" and "The cause of civil and religious liberty all over the world." These

toasts having been duly acknowledged by the editor of the Radical newspaper, who had been incarcerated on a charge of sedition, and by a gentleman who, anticipating the Mormon revelation, had taken unto himself the wife of another man, Sir Gilbert again rose, and with a graceful wave of his hand, and a premonitory "hem," ushered in the toast of the evening.

"Gentlemen," said he, "it is now my duty—I ought rather to say my high privilege—diverging from the more general sentiments of enlightened patriotic policy, which have already this evening been expressed in language more or less glowing and appropriate, and responded to by you with that cordial unanimity which shows how thoroughly your hearts are saturated—if I may be permitted to use the term—with adhesion to those liberal principles which the great Charles James Fox, whose private virtues and Spartan rectitude were only equalled by his public courage and rigid abnegation, vindicated on the scaffold—I mean those principles, liberal, as I said before, which the great Hampden, whose private virtues were only equalled by his public courage, vindicated on the scaffold—which the gallant Sydney consecrated with his blood on the field of battle—and which the great Charles James Fox, of whom it may truly be said, in the inspired language of the poet,

‘ First to the lists the mighty Trojan came,
And always was the last to leave the same’—

fulminated in the senate, striking terror into the bosoms, and confusion into the councils, of a corrupt and a

time-serving ministry. (Loud cheers.) Gentlemen, I repeat that it is now my duty—and duty has always been to me the polar star of conduct, ‘the fixed aurora of the northern sky’ (applause)—to introduce to you a gentleman, in whom we may fondly hope—if hope can be said to exist, or rather coincide in combination with absolute certainty and most entire assurance—in whom we may fondly hope, I say, to find united all that tends to the culture of the intellect, to the development of the understanding, to the formation of the scholar, the gentleman, the senator, the patriot, and the statesman. In the Honourable Sholto Linklater—(immense cheering, the whole company rising up)—in Sholto Linklater—to whom the prefix of ‘honourable’ is most appropriately applied, both on account of self-earned merit, and from ancient hereditary descent—in Sholto Linklater we recognise the champion of our cause, the vindicator of our independence, the patriotic barrier against the threatened encroachments of an unscrupulous and tyrannical faction, whose efforts, as sure as to-morrow’s sun shall set in a panoply of golden clouds, will be crowned with unspeakable confusion and inexpiable disgrace. (Loud cheers.) In proposing this toast, gentlemen, one regret alone distils a drop of bitterness into the full cup of enthusiasm, confidence, and joy. I regret that the laws of the country, and the fundamental constitution of the realm, which, though reformers, it is our earnest wish to preserve intact in their entirety, sacred in their inviolability, and pure in their original complexion—I say, gentlemen, I regret

that those laws and that constitution have rendered it inevitable that the presidency of this distinguished company, and the task of introducing to you our honourable and honoured candidate, should devolve upon an individual whose claims to your attention are, I am well aware, so limited and attenuated as my own. (Cries of No! no! and applause.) I can easily perceive, with the eye of fancy and imagination, what would be your delight, what would be your rapture, what would be your absolute delirium, if the chair which I now so unworthily occupy could be filled by that mirror of all that is great, gifted, and good, the Most Noble the Marquis of Carrabas. (Tremendous cheering.) Gentlemen, this is a topic which can only be touched by the pencil of discretion, when pointed with extremest delicacy. I approach it, I own, with superlative misgiving, lest, in the inspired language of the gifted Swan of Avon—

‘ One of two bad things you should esteem me—
Either a coward or a flatterer.’

For, gentlemen, I shall not disguise from you my conviction that I should justly incur the infamous imputation of being a coward, were I, through dread of misconstruction or fear of calumny, to suppress the utterance of my fixed, formed, and deliberate opinion, that Scotland cannot boast a nobler name than that of Carrabas (loud cheers); while I should equally be liable to the charge of flattery, were I to say that within the boundary of Scotland, from Coldstream to John o’

Groats, from Peterhead to Portree, you could find a single individual comparable to the noble Marquis (who is also Lord-Lieutenant of the county), for high intellectual accomplishment, profound political wisdom, determined fixity of purpose, and bland urbanity of condescension. With these few remarks, gentlemen, wrung from me by the exigency of the moment, and the irresistible impulses of a heart which is sometimes too full for utterance, I withdraw from this subject, feeling that, like Phæton, who, you may remember, attempted to drive the figurative horses of the sun—I may perhaps have aspired too high, and have become partially blinded by the brilliancy of the light upon which it was necessary to gaze. Reverting again to the more immediate subject of my toast, and anticipating your impatience to do honour to the selected candidate for the county, the stanch friend of the people, and the future Phoenix of our hopes, I propose, with no ordinary exultation, the health of the Honourable Sholto Linklater.”

If my readers should deem me tedious for having thus minutely reported the speech of the rhetorical baronet, they will no doubt be relieved by the assurance that I have preserved no authentic record of the reply of the Honourable Sholto. Indeed Œdipus himself could hardly have resolved the incoherent gobbling of our accomplished candidate into a discourse; but that was of little consequence, as the great majority of the company seemed to care less for oratory than for the more substantial and exhilarating joys of the de-

canter. Then there were clamorous calls for a song, which were responded to by the wag of the West, Jamie Pitlearie, who favoured us with a ditty in honour of St Rollox, one of the tutelary guardians of Glasgow, attributing to that inspired divine most of the modern mechanical inventions. The greater part of this effort of genius, which, however, I think I have seen somewhere in print, has escaped from my memory, but the concluding verse was something like this—

“ He kenn’d fu’ weel to wind and reel,
 Invented cambrie collars ;
 He was the first that ever durst
 Singe muslin wi’ het rollers.
 He searched the land, and fand black band,
 Made het the bellows’ noses,
 And frae his ain lang chimney-tap
 Made his apotheosis !

Chorus.

Then, brithers, join your sangs wi’ mine—
 Let’s spend the nicht in frolics ;
 We’ll never want a patron saunt,
 Sae lang’s we’ve gude St Rollox !”

After this, oratory was at a discount. The admiral and the Highland laird indeed, being under the impression that their dignity would be seriously compromised if they did not address the audience, successively got upon their legs and began to revile their political opponents ; but by this time “ the maut had fairly got aboon the meal,” and the company testified their impatience by shuffling of the feet, imitations of chanticleer, and ironical applause, under cover of which the disappointed orators sat down. Even Sir Gilbert

Mounthooly could no longer command attention. The eloquence of Ulysses was vain against the Ciræan influence of the liquor, which was rapidly transforming his companions into swine ; and just as the Laird of Stoupiewa's was clearing his throat for a flood of melody, Bailie M'Chappie, faithful to his promise, carried me off to an upper apartment, where in a few minutes I was fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ELECTION.

DAY dawned upon Slockendrouth as it dawns upon the quiet isles of the ocean, dissipating the clouds and drawing up the fogs, and calling men from needful slumber to the renewal of that labour which is their heritage. But the call to labour in that equivocal burgh was, on this occasion at least, unheeded ; for although it contained many an artisan who could ill afford a holiday, work was out of the question during the dependence of that election, men's blood being heated to the very fever-point by political excitement and exasperation. It is difficult even for those who witnessed the extraordinary and disgraceful scenes of that momentous period, to recall them now with all their ferocity and license. They appear rather like the impressions of a distempered dream, than real memories of the past. As the period to which I refer is now somewhat remote, it is perhaps fitting that I should state, very briefly, the circumstances which gave far more than usual importance to this and other elections.

When, after the rash declaration of the Duke of Wellington, that no practical reform of the representation was required, the Whigs came into office, parties were very nearly balanced in the House of Commons. The second reading of the famous Bill introduced by Lord John Russell was carried only by a majority of one, and in a subsequent division upon the motion that the House should go into committee, the Whig Ministry were left in a minority of eight. This led to the dissolution of Parliament, a step which was literally forced upon William the Fourth by his Ministry; therefore the fate of the Bill depended upon the character and complexion of the new Parliament. The middle classes, especially in the towns, were of course strenuous supporters of the Bill as it stood, and dreaded lest any alteration should be made in its provisions. They were shrewd enough to perceive that it was calculated to give them political preponderancy for the future, and that consideration, independent of ulterior objects, was sufficient to insure their support. The working classes again, though still excluded from the franchise, had been so wrought upon by unscrupulous demagogues and hireling agitators, that they believed that parliamentary reform would immediately be followed by measures for doubling the rate of wages, and halving the price of provisions. There were no limits to the extravagance of expectation. "All young ladies," wrote Sydney Smith, himself a partisan of reform, "imagine that, as soon as this Bill is carried, they will be in-

stantly married ; schoolboys believe that gerunds and supines will be abolished, and that currant tarts must ultimately come down in price ; the corporal and sergeant are sure of double pay ; bad poets expect a demand for their epics ; and fools will be disappointed, as they always are."

Notwithstanding this unanimity among the classes that were not yet represented, it was questionable whether the existing electoral body would return to the new Parliament a majority of members pledged to support the Bill. No one doubted that some measure of reform would be carried ; but measures are of divers capacities, and the ten-pounders having once obtained a glimpse of the bushel which exactly suited them, would not suffer it to be diminished. Hence arose the cry of "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," which resounded from every platform in the United Kingdom ; and had the agitation been confined to mere expression of opinion, however strong, no one could have challenged it as unconstitutional. But it was by no means certain that the existing electors would defer to public opinion. They had certain privileges, if not rights, to maintain, and they showed symptoms of obstinacy ; whereupon the character of the agitation was changed, and, after an interval of a century and a half, REVOLUTION again became rampant.

I use the term, heaven knows, in no offensive sense. I make every allowance for the state of the country at

the time, and for the eagerness of the desire, which I admit to be a laudable one, that existing abuses should be reformed. All I mean to assert is, that this was a revolution, if revolution means a public measure which is carried through in defiance of existing laws. For, in order that the result of the general election might be favourable to the progress of the Reform Bill in the Parliament about to assemble, coercion was not only preached up, but practised. The use of the bludgeon and the brickbat was openly recommended by the press; threats of the most atrocious description were levelled against all who dared to oppose the popular voice; mobs were organised and paraded; and that without the slightest remonstrance being made by the Government, or any steps being taken by the law authorities for the preservation of the public peace. Under such circumstances of frightful intimidation, the electors for each county and burgh were called upon to make their several returns.

At a very early hour, according to appointment, I repaired to the room of Mr Shearaway, whom I found already occupied with his papers. However prolonged may have been the orgies that followed the vocal exertions of the Laird of Stoupiewa's, it was evident that my employer had not participated therein, for his eye was clear, his hand steady, and there was no huskiness in his tone.

"You may copy that list, Norman," he said. "It's best to have it, though it may not be of much use.—Hang the fellows!" he continued, as if to himself, "I

think they will beat us ; but I don't know, after all, that it's worse than a victory."

The last observation, though probably intended for a soliloquy, excited my curiosity greatly ; and as Mr Shearaway was always very friendly, I ventured to ask—

"Do you think, sir, there is danger of our losing the election?"

"Between you and me, Norman—but on no account breathe a syllable of this," replied Mr Shearaway, "I suspect we shall lose it by three. I thought otherwise last night, but since eleven they have brought up seven men, whereas we have only two additional, and I cannot count on any more. I must do Butt and Benn the justice to say that they have managed very cleverly. Not that I was jockeyed, mark ye, but they made capital play with their reserve. Yes—I think I would take an even bet that they have a majority of three."

"What a sad disappointment!" said I, with the zeal of the office upon me.

"Disappointment? Yes—no doubt the Marquis will be disappointed. He's always wretched if he cannot work the county, like putty, between his finger and his thumb. But it's his own fault. I wanted to split twelve superiorities for last head-court, which would have made everything secure ; but the Marquis, as usual, boggled about the expense. Penny wise and pound foolish ! He's an obstinate old ram ; but that's neither here nor there. Egad ! if it were not for the discredit of the thing, I can't say that I shall be sorry if we lose the election."

I suppose that my countenance betrayed some surprise at this frank admission, for Mr Shearaway continued—

“The fact is, Norman, that this is no ordinary time. You young lads never look to consequences ; but I can see with half an eye that if this Bill is carried there will be an end of our profession. Conveyancing will be knocked up altogether, and we shall lose those pretty pickings that make up, as I can tell ye, the best half of the profits of the business. You may call that a selfish view if you please ; but I am much of the same mind as Demetrius the silversmith, who stood up for his craft ; ay, and would have carried the day too, if that gowk the town-clerk of Ephesus had not interfered ! But get on with your list, for I hear somebody coming.”

There was a knock at the door ; and a tall gentleman, muffled in a greatcoat and comforter, entered.

“I daresay you did not expect to see me here, Shearaway,” said the visitor, with a familiar nod. “But who is this swankie ?”

“My clerk—all right ; he’s close as wax. But what brings you here, Butt ? I did not expect that you would venture into the lion’s den.”

“Call it den of thieves, Shearaway,” replied the Tory agent, “for hang me if ever thieves’ house presented such a spectacle in the morning as your public room below ! Why, the fellows are absolutely lying in layers, not to say heads and throats !”

“Did your men behave themselves much better ?” said Shearaway.

"Why, yes. We flatter ourselves that we can carry our liquor like gentlemen. But to the point. I suppose you know pretty well by this time how the election will go?"

"I have my own notions, certainly. But come—what's the use of fencing? Tell me honestly, Butt—are you on the square?"

"Yes, upon my honour! We carry the day by either three or four."

"I cannot contradict you," said Shearaway.

"Well then, such being the case, I have not the slightest doubt that there will be a frightful row. The mob here is the worst in Scotland; and I am positively assured that they intend to attack us after the election. There has been wild work elsewhere—little short of murder, I am told."

"Confound liberalism!" said Shearaway.

"Amen!" said Butt; "to do you justice, I believe you are at heart no more a liberal than myself. Now, you know very well that not a man of us will be deterred from voting by any amount of intimidation; but the consequences may be very ugly."

"I do not doubt the pluck of your party," replied Shearaway. "I believe they would go through fire and brimstone rather than give in. But how can I help you?"

"In this way. After the election is over, try to keep the crowd from leaving the court-house until we get to the hotel. After that we shall do well enough. What I want to guard against is an attack in the street; so

like a good fellow, get somebody to address the mob—some one who can humbug them, you know—for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.”

“That’s easy said, Mr Butt;” replied Shearaway, “and I think your notion is by no means a bad one, if we could only find the proper man. But the fact is that most of our fellows who can speak at all are such bletherers that they would clear a kirk in no time. There’s old Sir Gilbert Mounthooly would have no objection to try it, for he likes nothing better than to hear his own voice; but the body is so wearisome with his pompous twists and twirls, that before he got through half a sentence the mob would be upon you, like a pack of terriers after a cat. As for Sholto Linklater, between you and me, he’s little better than a born idiot. Jamie Pitlearie might do; but no—though he can write a funny song, he’s but a haveril when he tries to speak. Hang me, if I can think of any one likely to answer the purpose!”

“Why, you have half-a-dozen advocates with you, at least. There’s Jawbone.”

“Jawbone? It’s little you know Jawbone! He’ll not speak a word without a fee. And, to tell you the truth, I don’t think any advocate from the Parliament House would be listened to. Since they began attempting to speak fine English, it’s difficult to make head or tail of what they say. Jeffrey has been the ruin of them. They keep snipping and snapping at their words like a pair of tailor’s shears.”

“Well; but, really, Shearaway, you must help me at

this pinch. Surely you must know some fellow who is accustomed to address a mob."

"Egad! I think I have hit upon the man at last. There's George Gash, him that was editor of the *Ren-frew Regenerator*—he's a first-rate hand at a harangue; but then he's a dour Radical, and has small love for your party; and no wonder, for he has been pulled over the coals before now. But Gash is not a bad fellow after all, and he owes me a day in harvest. I'll try what I can do, Butt; I will indeed—for, hang me, if I like this rising of the mob. I say—if the worst comes to the worst, I suppose you know where the Sheriff is to be found?"

"Trust me for that, old boy!" replied Butt. "And now it's time I should be off. Many thanks, Shearaway; you have behaved as you always do, like a perfect gentleman, and I won't forget it." So saying, he muffled himself in his coat and comforter, and took his departure.

"Three or four!" said Mr Shearaway, musingly; "humph—I reckoned on three, but who can the fourth be? Some stray liferenter, I suppose. But what is the use of bothering about it? One is as good as a dozen for a majority. You may tie up the papers, Norman, and go down stairs. Remember, mum's the word. Breakfast will be ready presently for those who can eat any; but, my word! if I had sat like some of them till three o'clock this morning, I should be sorry to look a beefsteak in the countenance."

The greater part of our friends, however, being

accustomed to copious potations, falsified Mr Shear-away's prognostic, by displaying much aptitude in the use of the knife and fork ; but I observed that each man, before applying himself to the discussion of the solid delicacies with which the board was spread, fortified his stomach with a large glass either of bitters or brandy.

Meanwhile the hour appointed for the election drew nigh, and we proceeded in long column to the court-house, Sir Gilbert Mounthooly leading the way, with our hopeful candidate on his arm.

It was so arranged that we should arrive before our rivals, in order, I suppose, to lessen the chance of a collision ; and I must admit that a glance at the crowd, which already thronged the galleries, amply justified the precaution. Never had I set eyes upon such a collection of ruffians as roared, whistled, whooped, and yelled above our heads. There were colliers from the mines, carters from the villages, weavers from the streets, and cobblers from their stalls, all in their working clothes, swarthy and begrimed, gesticulating like madmen, wrestling for the foremost seats, and uttering diabolical howls for no apparent reason except the exercise of their hideous voices. Nothing like it was ever witnessed without the walls of a lunatic asylum—it was a frightful hall of Abaddon.

Our men were impressed with the notion that they were very popular ; and Sir Gilbert, as our ostensible chief, thought it his duty on entering to make one of his most elaborate bows, by way of homage to the

majesty of the people. A hoarse bray of scorn was the reward of his politeness.

"Aff wi' yer hat, auld Mounthooly!" "Gosh! is that him they ca' Sir Gilbert? What a fashionless body he is!" "What are ye girning for at huz, ye wizened jackanape?" "Wha's that ane wi' the muckle whuskers? Is that Linklater? De'il be in me, if I wadna as soon send a cuddie as that man to Parliament!" "I say, Linklater! gie's a sang!" "Gude-sake! there's Gibson o' Slag! Eh, wow, Johnie Gibson, but ye think yoursel' braw amang the gentles!" "What about the wages, Johnie Gibson? Ye'll mind ye are awin' us money!" "Three groans for Slag!" "Huzzay! there's Geordie Gash! Geordie's a kent freend o' the people; huzzay for Geordie!" "Gie him the sow's tail! that will suit him better." "Wha's yon? an admiral, did ye say? Losh keep us, man—he's no fit to steer a barge on the canawl!" "Whigs! Whigs! rotten trash!" "Doon wi' the areestocrats!" "Bide a wee, chields; there's the Tories!"

Such were some of the intelligible fragments that caught my ears amidst the universal din; but when our opponents entered, such a storm arose as utterly baffles description. I have read somewhere the narrative of a traveller, who had the misfortune to encamp for the night in a forest inhabited by howling monkeys; but appalling as was his account of the brutal serenade, I cannot believe that it was half so frightful as the yelling of that excited mob. It was a horrid and a sickening spectacle. Here were gentlemen

blameless in their private life, indulgent landlords, liberal in their charities, and just in all their dealings, exposed to the vituperation, insult, and ridicule of an obscene and ignorant rabble; and for what? Simply because they were using, according to the best of their judgment, that privilege which was given to them by the laws of the country! Talk of religious intolerance—talk of regal tyranny! There is no tyranny or intolerance like that exercised by a mob.

The business of the day went on in dumb show. A preses was elected, and after calling the roll, with all the necessary formalities, it appeared that there was a majority of three in favour of the Tory candidate, Major Lindores. Then Pandemonium opened. The beasts in the gallery—for I will not dignify them by the name of men—spat down indiscriminately upon all below. Missiles were thrown, one of which cut the forehead of Major Lindores to the bone; but the sight of the blood of the veteran, who had lost an arm at Waterloo, brought no compunction to the miscreants—it rather gave them a thirst for further outrage. I will say this for our party, that they behaved uncommonly well. In the first access of indignation, Sir Gilbert Mounthooly started up, and shook his fist towards that quarter of the gallery from which the stone was thrown; and Sholto Linklater—stupid as he was, no doubt, poor fellow—almost shed tears as he wiped the blood from the brow of his successful antagonist. One might have expected that the rabble would be touched by such an incident. Not they! The in-

fernal clamour was continued ; and it became evident that, unless some diversion could be effected, the riot in the street would be terrible.

At this juncture Mr George Gash, prompted by Shearaway, arose. I must confess that I had not the slightest expectation that he would gain a hearing. The attempt seemed utterly hopeless, nevertheless he succeeded. It is wonderful how fond the populace are, even in their most excited moods, of oratory, when it is of a kind that suits their understanding and appeals to their prejudices ; and how completely they can be controlled, for a time, by the demagogue who gains possession of their ear. Over the mob, it was well known that Gash could exercise a wonderful influence. Tall, burly, and broad-chested, with an expressive countenance and a fine eye, his appearance riveted the attention. His gestures, without being violent, gave the impression of considerable power ; and his voice, naturally a deep bass, had been exercised and trained till it was capable of every kind of intonation. Above all, Gash possessed the invaluable secret of appearing thoroughly in earnest, so that his audience never for a single moment doubted of his sincerity. A man so endowed ought unquestionably to have attained a higher position than that of editor of an obscure newspaper ; and so he would, had his lot been cast in any other country but Scotland. It is with regret and even shame that I make the avowal, but nevertheless it is true that, in Scotland, apart from the regular professions, talent of any kind, if unsupported

by connection, has received little recognition or encouragement from the chiefs of parties, who are usually too much occupied in providing for their own relatives and satellites to bestow due attention upon merit, or to enlist it in the public service.

“Men of Slockendrouth!” said Gash, and his voice filled the court-house, like the sudden peal of an organ, enforcing silence where all before had been confusion—“Men of Slockendrouth, listen to me! I take heaven and earth to witness that what we have seen to-day is the last outrage that ever shall be committed in Scotland against the sovereign rights of the people, roused at length to indignation, and determined no longer to submit to the rule of a selfish oligarchy. I tell you this—I who have suffered in the people’s cause, I who have been dragged to prison for their sake! I tell you this—but I tell you further, that it is far better for the great cause to which all of us are sworn, that we should sustain a partial defeat to-day, than be lulled into security by a temporary triumph, which, after all, is but of a party nature. Do not deceive yourselves. This is no real battle for you or for your rights. It is but the struggle of two great factions for political power; a struggle which, were it ended now, would leave the working classes no better than they are; would not redeem you from your degrading thralldom; would still leave you in the base condition of serfs, toiling and labouring with your sweat that others may reap the precious harvest of your industry!

“I have voted this day with the Whigs, because I

cannot conscientiously set my face against any measure of reform, however limited or poor. I honour the Whigs for having conceded even this little, because I know that they feel it to be a sacrifice. But do you think that this Reform Bill of which we have heard so much, and which I am willing to accept, but only as a mere instalment—do you think that it will give you, the working men of the country—you who are the creators of the wealth which you are not permitted to enjoy—do you think that it will give you that power and predominance which is your birthright, which you must have and shall have if you are only true to yourselves, and sternly refuse to be hoodwinked or cajoled by statesmen who are ready enough now to avail themselves of your might, but who would cast you from them the moment that they could dispense with your aid? Believe it not! This Bill does but palter with the evils that beset and oppress the country—it does not try to cure them. It would leave intact the Church, that monstrous structure of superannuated bigotry, with its brood of sable cormorants preying upon the vitals of the land! It would perpetuate the House of Lords, that nest of a degraded aristocracy, where men too effeminate to labour meet to apportion the taxes wrung from labour, among themselves and their children, and to pass laws for riveting more deeply the fetters which bind us to the earth! It would continue to maintain an army levied for no other purpose than to prevent you from asserting your liberties—an army which you must pay for, in order that it may trample

and shoot you down, should you dare so much as murmur against the tyranny of your oppressors! And what does it profess to do for you, that you should so clamorously insist upon having it? Which of you men up there in the gallery will have votes should this Bill become law to-morrow? Not one! And who will have votes? Why, the very men who are your immediate pillagers, the detested owners of the truck-shops, the pawn-brokers, and the publicans!

“Men of Slockendrouth! are you such fools as to be imposed on by such a phantom of a measure as this? Do you think that if we had carried the election to day, and returned to Parliament the honourable gentleman beside me, whom I know to have an honest heart, notwithstanding the taint of aristocracy in him, which, however, is less his fault than his misfortune—if every election in Scotland had resulted in the return of members pledged to support this Bill—that you would have been the gainers? I tell you, no! It is not for your advantage, working-men, that the settlement should be made upon such terms. My hope is—and the result of this day’s election does but inflame it—that these tyrants may be encouraged to resist even the pitiful instalment of justice contained in this Bill, and that, should it pass the House of Commons, it may be rejected by an immense majority in the Peers. Then indeed shall we hear the roar of an insulted people, more terrible than that of the lion when roused in his hunger and his wrath! Then shall the resistless might of millions of brawny arms, which no

hireling soldiery can withstand, be displayed! Crown and coronet, mitre and ermine, shall perish in the conflagration they have provoked; and the rights of the people be established on a surer basis than ever yet was known since this island emerged from the unfathomable depths of the ocean!

“Therefore I say to you, men of Slockendrouth, mourn not for this day’s defeat, but rather rejoice that the cup of iniquity, heretofore not full, is now charged and loaded to the brim; and know this, that the first drop which runs over that cup will be the signal for your glorious enfranchisement! As for the men who have defeated us to-day, let them pass unnoticed and unpunished. Fain would they be able to say that, excited by their heartlessness, you had been tempted into a breach of the law. Do not fall into that snare. Sacred be the law, whatever it is, so long as it remains unaltered; but it needs no prophet to foresee that the time is coming, yea, is nigh at hand, when you will be the makers of the laws, and then let our oppressors tremble!”

I have attempted, in so far as I can, to give both the substance and style of this remarkable speech, which was perfectly successful in its object—viz., to give the Tory party the opportunity of slipping away unnoticed during its delivery. It was also very useful for us, for it saved us the necessity of putting up Sholto Linklater to speak; and my private opinion is that both Butt and Shearaway, though of course disapproving of the political sentiments which he enunciated, sent

letters of acknowledgment, enclosing notes of a more satisfactory description, to the gifted and fluent orator. Some of our party, however, were anything but pleased with the tone of this democratical discourse, which denied them all credit for having stood forth as the champions of the public liberty. The fact is, that the Whigs were at that time shaking in their shoes. They had evoked a demon whom they could not lay, and the terrible apprehension that they might ultimately be torn to pieces, made them curse the folly of their leaders in rousing the passions of the mob.

“Gey and strang drink that, Bailie!” said Gibson of Slag, near whom I was seated, to Mr M’Chappie. “That chield sticks at naething! It’s clear enech that if he had it a’ his ain way, there wad be naeboddy in Parliament but landloupers and blackguards like them in the gallery!”

“It’s my belief there wad be nae Parliaments ava,” replied the Bailie. “It wad just come to ilka man helping himsel’ out of his neighbour’s kist. Gudesake! just think o’ vagabonds like them being makers o’ the laws! Their first law wad be for half work and double wages, and then what wad become o’ capital? I’m clean sick o’ politics, Mr Gibson; and I’m beginning to think that we’ve gane muckle ower far.”

“Troth, sae an I!” said Gibson. “Ance let this splore gae by, and ye’ll no catch me again meddling wi’ Reform. Did ye ever hear sic a din? They’ve fand out at last that the Tories have given them leg-bail,

and now they're off to the Masons' Arms. God kens what may come o't—maybe murder!"

And in fact the mob, whose intention had been engrossed by the insidious eloquence of Mr Gash, began to look about them; and seeing that they had missed their prey, thronged out with yells of execration. Somewhat crestfallen—for even the most stolid of our party was conscious that we cut but a sorry figure—we drew off our forces, and returned to our hotel without molestation. There a splendid banquet awaited us, but there was a total absence of that hilarity which had characterised the repast of the previous day. It was not the bitterness of defeat that rankled in the minds of the company—for I believe few of them cared in reality about the issue of the election—but it seemed as if their eyes had been opened to the extreme gravity of the crisis, and as if a sudden dread of impending revolution had come upon them with the effect of a moral ague.

Such, I conjecture, was the nature of the thoughts that coursed like dark shadows over the minds of the majority of the guests, strangling their mirth, and making them appear as lugubrious as mourners at a funeral feast. But the chagrin of the more prominent members of the party was even greater. Sir Gilbert Mounthooly was one of a small knot of baronets and landed proprietors, who, at the beginning of the Reform movement, had entered into it with much zest and zeal, being under the unfortunate delusion that

the people, impressed with a due sense of their dignity and condescension, would adopt them as leaders, and implicitly defer to their suggestions. Accordingly, Sir Gilbert went about from meeting to meeting, wherever there was a gathering to promote the cause of reform, enunciating his interminable and inextricable periods from which no proper meaning could be gathered, until he became an absolute laughing-stock and object of scorn. The people are remarkably quick in their appreciation of the real merit of public speakers. They may be deluded by flashy talent, but they will not put up with a proser. Also they viewed with some suspicion the sudden conversion of the Baronet to democratic opinions. He had long been known as a pompous and haughty man, ridiculously proud of the antiquity of his family (which was a heraldic mistake), a notorious stickler for etiquette, and, moreover, a most abject worshipper of the nobility. These were, to say the least of it, strange antecedents for a personage who was now attempting, however impotently, to assume the character of a popular champion. In consequence, though he was allowed to speak—indeed he would not be denied—he was never taken into the confidence of the real leaders of the movement; and the applause with which his first appearances were greeted, and of which he was vain beyond measure, soon ceased to regale his ears. The occurrences of that day had mortified him greatly. The contemptuous reception vouchsafed him by the rabble showed how little influence he possessed; and it was gall and

wormwood to him to have it practically demonstrated that he, the great Sir Gilbert Mounthooly of that ilk—baronet, diplomatist, and rhetorician—was a person of much less consequence in the eyes of the commonalty than a low plebeian who edited a country newspaper. Therefore the proud heart of the Mounthooly was cast down if not humbled; and he applied himself to his victuals with the air of an injured Aristides.

The happiest man at the table undoubtedly was Sholto Linklater. Honest Sholto had been badgered into standing for the county—a position which he did not covet, and for which he was utterly unfit; and it was an immense relief to him to know that, instead of being packed off to London, which he dreaded by anticipation as a monstrous bore, he might remain at home and give himself up entirely to golf and coursing, the only occupations for which he cared. Therefore the face of Sholto was glad: he rallied Sir Gilbert on his despondency, shouted for champagne, and, like Bitias at the banquet of Queen Dido,

“ Impiger hausit
Spumantem pateram, et pleno se proluit auro.”

But the cloth had not been yet removed, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and a gentleman, pale from agitation or rather terror, entered. We saw instantly that he was charged with tidings of some catastrophe, and there was breathless silence while he spoke as follows:—

“Gentlemen — the mob have risen! They have smashed the windows of the Masons’ Arms. They are breaking into the house; and they swear they will murder the Tories!”

Each man involuntarily looked in his neighbour’s face, and saw there nothing but consternation. One man only—and I revere him for it—started instantly to his feet. It was Sholto Linklater, whose brave and manly instinct dictated at once the right course of action.

“So help me God!” he cried, “I shall not sit here while gentlemen are being knocked on the head by cowardly scoundrels like these! Sir Gilbert—Admiral—Benridden—all of you—follow me! Take what weapons you can find—sticks, anything—your bare fists will suffice! Keep close together, and I’ll answer for it we beat the blackguards; or if not, better have bloody heads than desert our neighbours!”

This speech, the longest and by far the best that honest Sholto ever uttered, told with electric effect. The company gave an approving cheer, and rose up unanimously. But they were not called upon to act. Suddenly we heard a dull sound like the surging of the sea, or a river coming down in spate, and then the sharp clattering of horses’ hoofs in the street. I rushed to the window, and saw the sheriff of the county galloping past at the head of a detachment of dragoons with their swords drawn. We knew that all was safe.

“Weel is it for me,” said Mr M’Chappie, wiping the

perspiration from his forehead—"Weel is it for me that the sodgers cam' up in the nick o' time! For ye see, Maister Sinclair, my blude was raised, and I wad hae grippit haud o' the biggest chield amang them a'. But, Lordsake, there was some deevils yonder in the gallery the day, that were twice as strang as Jean that I forgathered wi' in Paris; and I'll no say but that I might hae had the warst o't. Sae it's maybe just as weel that the dragoons have the settling o' the job. They'll clear the causeway in nae time. But wha wad hae thought that Sholto Linklater had such spunk in him? I had nae great notion o' the creature, but I think muckle mair of him now. You was really grand—no hawering or nonsense, but a bauld manly spirit. What for is he no a colonel o' dragoons? It's a vera queer thing, but there's mair smeddum in the auld blude than folks nowadays are willing to allow."

The conflict ended, so far as I can recollect, without any serious consequences; for the mob, though bent on mischief, dispersed before the charge of the cavalry. But the annals of that year are full of instances of popular outrage and incendiarism, which prove how narrow was the escape from violent revolution. It is not my wish to make commentaries on public events. My object is to restrict myself as much as possible to the narrative of facts and impressions. I shall therefore abstain from sermonising; but I must be allowed to say that, having once witnessed a civil commotion of this kind, I most devoutly trust that I shall never be spectator of another.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF?

IN a rising commercial country the acquisition of wealth is generally considered as the chief object of existence. In vain do preachers insist (though for the most part not very earnestly), that happiness does not depend upon the heaping up of riches, or the multiplying of possessions, and appeal in corroboration of their doctrine to the inspired authority of Scripture. They are not met with a broad denial, but they are listened to with perfect indifference. The tendency of parental instinct, in the case of sons at least, is to place them as early as possible in situations where they must work hard and incessantly in order to lay the foundation of their future fortune ; and as instinct is rarely wrong in its general direction, I am not disposed to challenge, on broad grounds, the wisdom of an arrangement which is almost universal. But I must needs say that, in Scotland, too much eagerness is shown, on the part of the wealthier classes, to abridge the educational period for the sake of early initiation

into practical life. They hurry their sons through the universities, sending them for the most part to such classes only as are rudimentary ; and then place them in the office or counting-house, where they are expected to abandon all other pursuits, to forget by degrees the little learning they have acquired, and to devote the whole of their energies thereafter to the prosecution of their worldly calling. That, assuredly, is not the proper way to elevate the middle classes, which, taken in the aggregate, must be considered as the most important division of the community. At school, the educationary process is rather coercive than voluntary. Few boys take kindly to Latin, Greek, or Mathematics,—for this reason, that they are kept painfully grubbing at roots, struggling with grammatical difficulties, and solving bitter problems, without any scope being given to the imagination, or any real interest created in the subject of their studies. One principle alone, emulation—the desire of being uppermost, or the disgrace of being lowest—stimulates them at that period of life. But as the intellect widens and expands, as the boy advances towards manhood, he begins vividly to appreciate the charms and fascinations of learning. No longer tortured by aorists, or perplexed by the intricacies of quantity, he can derive a deep enjoyment from the magnificent strains of Homer, or the placid majesty of Virgil. What formerly was a task becomes a source of sincere delight. He passes from the masters of antiquity to those of modern thought, and is never weary of the contrast. The vast domain of

science opens out before him, and he luxuriates in the thought of being able to wander over it at will. Yet it is precisely at this point that parental thrift too often interferes with the generous aspirations of youth. All at once it flashes upon Senex that Juvenis is in the fair way of becoming a scholar and a man of letters—a result which Senex by no means contemplated when he sent Juvenis to school. Senex has not much faith in the power of books or of book-learning to advance a man in the world. He has never troubled himself much with books, but he has contrived to make his way notwithstanding. He is estimated on 'Change as good for twenty thousand pounds at the least; whereas many a fellow whom he remembers above him at school, has barely salt for his porridge. The best book in the world, Senex is willing to allow, is the Bible, which he opens once a-week; but the next best is his ledger, which he studies every day, Sundays of course excepted, when he merely calculates profits when the sermon is unusually tiresome. Juvenis, if he wishes to succeed, must do the same. There is a desk and a three-legged stool provided for him, which he is expected to occupy from nine in the morning till eight at night, with a proper interval for meals. That is the true way to make a fortune. But as Juvenis really seems to have a kind of turn for reading, Senex won't be hard upon him. After eight P.M. his time shall be at his own disposal. Let him read, then, from eight to eleven.

Alas, Senex! Has age so chilled your blood as to

have obliterated all memory of the way in which your youthful evenings, after office hours, were spent? Was your own palate innocent of the flavour of ale and oysters, and did you never wash away the cobwebs of business with potations of a stronger kind? Respectable as you are now, were you always in bed by eleven? No, Senex!—you dare not aver that upon your oath; nor shall I judge you harshly on account of your individual transgressions, for well I know that the bow cannot always be bent, nor the sociality of youth restrained. You are sorry for these things now, I doubt not—but can you fail to perceive that, if you shut up Juvenis in the counting-house precisely as you were shut up, the latter end of his day will be spent precisely as was yours? As you drank and dissipated with Willie Dalglish forty years ago, so will he drink and dissipate this self-same evening with Charlie Dalglish, who is the exact counterpart of his father. There is but one way to prevent that. Do not transform him all at once into a beast of burden. Encourage him to cultivate his mind—let him have reasonable time for study—thwart him not in his desire to educate himself to a higher point—so shall you most effectually keep him from the tavern and other haunts, wherein, as your own experience assures you, he is not likely to acquire any wholesome lessons of morality.

There is only one really liberal profession that I know of, and that is the medical one. A physician (so that he does not countenance innovations in practice) may study as much as he pleases; and the more

that he reads and knows, the higher is the estimation in which he is held. A divine can hardly, even if he were so inclined, apply himself to anything else than the strict duties of his profession. Wonderfully sharp-sighted are the jackdaws in detecting even a parti-coloured feather in the tail of one of their tribe. They resent its exhibition as a reflection upon their sable uniform, and never cease pecking, scolding, and chattering, until they have it out. Worthy John Home, as good a soul and devout a minister as ever put on the bands, committed the awful sin of writing a tragedy, *Douglas*; and straightway such a din, clamour, and shout of execration arose from the Church, that he was fain to throw off his gown, abandon his living, and thenceforward herd with the laity. As for the law, it is notorious that a young barrister has no chance of attaining to practice, if he is even suspected of pursuing any other studies than those which are dictated by Themis. Social irregularities may be forgiven him, but flirtation with the muses is a crime beyond the reach of absolution. He may fearlessly addict himself to claret; but, if he prefers the waters of Hippocrene, he is for aye forsaken by the solicitors.

Many a young fellow have I known, with natural abilities above the average, who, in consequence of this absurd and pernicious prejudice, has lapsed into sottishness and ruin. About the time when I entered Mr Shearaway's office, there was a positive mania in Scotland for the legal profession. Almost every young man you met with in Edinburgh was destined to be

an Advocate or a Writer to the Signet. The Scottish gentry being generally poor, held their heads proportionably high, and sneered at mercantile pursuits as unbecoming the dignity of their blood. Nominations to India could only be procured through high influence; and commissions in the army were no longer gratuitous as in the time of war. Colonisation had not begun to attract the sons of the gentry; though some of the more robust and enterprising had visions of the backwoods of Canada, and talked incoherently of sledges and of bears. As for New Zealand and Australia, in those days one would as soon have thought of emigrating to Spitzbergen or Nova Zembla. The Law, as I have said, was the favourite profession; and so overstocked was it in every branch, that had the people of Scotland been fifty times more litigious than they were, there was no danger of their suffering detriment for lack of advice or advocacy. I suspect that the principles enunciated in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* were then but imperfectly understood. It never seems to have struck any one that the legal profession, however necessary and useful, is merely parasitical—that it adds nothing to production, but derives all its nutriment from the body politic round which it is twined. That was an axiom of political economy too deep for the comprehension of the lairds, who, while groaning over the accounts yearly rendered them by their agents, simply took note of this—that the lawyers necessarily must be very thriving people, since they contrived, one way or another, to appropriate so

considerable a proportion of their rents. Then, by a process of intuitive logic, they arrived at the conclusion that if they bred one son a writer, and another an advocate, the money which was now passing into the pockets of strangers might be made to circulate in the family. There was no flaw so far in their reasoning; but the misfortune was that hundreds of them reasoned alike and simultaneously; and the necessary result was a glut in the juridical market.

Many of my old friends and compatriots have long since vanished from the scene. After spending some of their best years in idleness, and contracting those miserable habits which idleness rarely fails to induce—after lingering on in the vain hope that they might yet find an opening, but constantly doomed to disappointment—they have taken flight, like migratory birds that have tarried too long, and been wafted, God knows whither, by the four winds of heaven. Most of them, I fear, are in their graves. Some of them, I am glad to know from report, have lighted in the colonies, and done well or poorly according to the proportion of energy they retained. Some have retired into the country, their once high ambition now satisfied with some small situation from which they derive a competence; and their favourite recreation, when they meet with an old crony, is to recall the memory of those days which were the most unfortunate of their existence. Well—I need not vaunt. All of us are, more or less, slaves of circumstance. Our highest aspirations—such as we conceive when we look to the

world before us—are very rarely fulfilled. We aspire to fame; and some reach it by devious paths, which they had not originally contemplated. We desire wealth, and it flows in upon us from a quarter which we never had anticipated.

As I was not “articled” in the office of Messrs Meikleary, Littlewoo, and Shearaway, I had of course the disposal of my own time in so far as was consistent with the wishes of my employers. After the memorable election at Slockendrouth, Mr Shearaway had treated me with marked kindness and consideration; and on my expressing a desire to attend certain advanced classes in the University, at hours which were rather inconsistent with office regulations, he at once gave his consent.

“I wish you to understand, Norman,” said he, “that so long as you choose to remain here, you are quite free to study as you like. I knew your uncle from a boy. He was a devilish clever fellow, but somehow or other he never could contrive to bring his pigs to the right market. I hope you will have better luck. As to giving you advice about these matters, I really do not feel myself competent to do it. If I were sure that you intended to enter the profession, I would tell you at once to stick to the desk, and attend to nothing else; but I have a kind of notion—for I’ve watched you, my lad, more closely than you may think—that such is not your destiny. Norman Sinclair—tell me truly; have you any deliberate plan for the future?”

“As yet, none, Mr Shearaway.”

Shearaway had recourse to his snuff-box. "No plan for the future, Norman? Well—that puzzles me more and more. I know that you have poetry notions; though, to do you justice, you don't bring them forward, or talk nonsense about the claims of genius, like some young jackasses, who think because they can make two words clink together at the end of lines, that they are heaven-born poets. Poetry, when it pays, is no doubt a most excellent thing; for that is the true test of every kind of manufactures. There is no mark of merit so sure as a steady demand, let the article be what it may. Walter Scott might have written off his fingers at law-papers before he would have made half as much as he cleared by the *Lady of the Lake*; and, questionless, the world has been the gainer thereby. But, Norman, more than half the brains of the nation were stowed in that grand auld head of his! We may have to wait a long while before we look on his like again."

I assured Mr Shearaway, most emphatically, that I had not the slightest intention of cultivating poetry, or indeed any kind of literature, as a profession; and that my only object was to acquire information on certain subjects of which I was at present profoundly ignorant. I ventured to think, I said, that whatever might be my ultimate destination, such studies could hardly fail to be of advantage.

"Right, Norman, right!" said Mr Shearaway; "it's a true proverb that a man is never too old to learn. And you need not mind about attending the office so

closely as you used to do ; for, between you and me, this Reform Bill has made a sad hole in our business. We could make easy shift with half the staff of clerks we used to employ, if it were not that the poor lads might be difficulted to find meal for their porridge. Heigho ! I suppose the next thing they will do will be to cut down the forms of process.”

Profiting by this permission, I attended during two winter sessions the lectures of some of the most renowned professors in the University of Edinburgh, a high privilege which, by the Scottish system, is open to every one, who chooses to avail himself of it, without the necessity of entering into an exclusively academic career, as is the case of the great English universities. And when summer came—for in Scotland, alas ! there is no spring, winter rolling itself remorselessly, like a huge polar bear, over what should be the beds of the early flowers, and crushing them ere they are developed—when summer came, and the trees put on their pale-green liveries, and the brakes were blue with the woodhyacinth, and the ferns unfolded their curl, what ecstasy it was to steal an occasional holiday, and wander, rod in hand, by some quiet stream up the moorlands, inhaling health from every breeze, nor seeking shelter from the gentle shower as it dropped its manna from the heavens ! And then the long holidays, when the town was utterly deserted, and but one or two of those singularly stolid beings, whom nature seems to have endowed with such dense organs of locality that it is a positive pain to them to wander a mile beyond their

home, remain as recipients of the post—how I did enjoy these, as they can only be enjoyed by the possessors of the double talisman of strength and youth! No more care—no more trouble—no more task-work—no thought even of the graver themes suggested by my later studies! Look—standing on the Calton Hill, behold yon blue range of mountains to the west—cannot you name each far pinnacle from its form? Benledi, Benvoirlich, Benlmond! O the beautiful land, the elysium that lies round the base of those distant giants! The forest of Glenfinlas, Loch Achray with its weeping birches, the grand defiles of the Trosachs, and Ellen's Isle, the pearl of the one lake that genius has for ever hallowed! Up, sluggard! Place your knapsack on your back; but stow it not with unnecessary gear, for you have still further to go, and your rod also must be your companion, if you mean to penetrate the region beyond. Money? Little money suffices him who travels on foot, who can bring his own fare to the shepherd's bothy where he is to sleep, and who sleeps there better and sounder than the tourist who rolls from station to station in his barouche, grumbling because the hotels are overcrowded, and miserable about the airing of his sheets. Money? You would laugh if you heard me mention the sum which has sufficed for my expenditure during a long summer month; for the pedestrian, humble though he be, has his own especial privileges, and not the least of these is that he is exempted from all extortion. Donald—God bless him!—has a knack of putting on the prices; and when an

English family comes posting up to the door of his inn, clamorously demanding every sort of accommodation which a metropolitan hotel could afford, grumbling at the lack of attendance, sneering at the quality of the food, and turning the whole establishment upside down for their own selfish gratification, he not unreasonably determines that the extra trouble shall be paid for in that gold which rarely crosses his fingers except during the short season when tourists and sportsmen abound. But Donald, who is descended from the M'Gregor, does not make spoil of the poor. The sketcher or the angler who come to his door, with the sweat upon their brow, and the dust of the highway or the pollen of the heather on their feet, meet with a hearty welcome ; and though the room in which their meals are served is but low in the roof, and the floor strewn with sand, and the attic wherein they lie is garnished with two beds and a shake-down, yet are the viands wholesome, the sheets clean, and the tariff so undeniably moderate that even parsimony cannot complain.

Happy, happy days!—happy even now, though only recalled by memory. For although age has not yet clawed me in its clutch, and my strength and power of endurance remain unimpaired, though my elasticity may be somewhat lessened—I opine that a man on the steady side of forty does, somehow or other, cut a ridiculous figure in a knapsack and blouse, and ought to conform to the more luxurious habits which are expected from an individual of his standing. We must all of us adapt our habits and our pastimes to our age.

We cannot hunt for eggs, break into orchards, or fish for minnows at twenty as we did at fifteen. We cannot run races, pull boats, or indulge in such boisterous hilarity at thirty as we did at twenty ; and when we have reached the maturity of forty, we must perforce submit to whatever restrictions tyrant custom imposes, and be as cautious of shocking the prejudices of that starched old dame Respectability, as though she were a maiden aunt to whose accumulations we expected to succeed.

In this way I made the circuit of wellnigh the whole of the Scottish Highlands, penetrating as far as Cape Wrath and the wild district of Edderachylis, nor leaving unvisited the grand scenery of Loch Corruisk, and the stormy peaks of Skye. Nor did I forget the scenes of my childhood, for the Osetts still lived at the Birkenshaws, and more than one delightful week did I spend there each summer, exploring Gameshope, or the Linns of Talla, where the Covenanters of old held their meetings ; or clambering up the steep ascent by the Grey Mare's Tail to lonely and lovely Loch Skene, or casting for trout in the silver waters of St Mary's. Old Jamie—I should rather say Mr Osett—had by this time become a patriarch, and, as a ruling elder of the kirk, exercised no slight degree of spiritual jurisdiction in the vale of Yarrow. Bonny May Osett had, I must needs admit, lost all fairyness of form ; and, though still comely, had become, like most rustic beauties, somewhat stout and clumsy. Nevertheless I had good reason to believe that her charms had subdued the heart

of at least one devoted swain, for the son of a farmer, who lived over the hill upon Manor Water, contrived to find his way to the Birkenshaws at hours which hardly could have suited his pastoral occupation ; and at his appearance I observed that May's rosy cheeks flushed up to the colour of the peony. Davie, my ancient playfellow, had shot from a chubby boy into a tall, thin, and somewhat gawky lad ; shy, bashful, yet withal endowed with mother wit, and a strong sense of the humorous ; and rather desirous, being somewhat affected by the epidemic of the times, to try his fortune beyond the limits of his native valley. These aspirations he imparted to me, as I well remember, one fine summer day, when we were sitting beneath an old thorn-bush near the mouth of the Meggat, known to all good anglers as "The Trysting Tree ;" but as I may have occasion hereafter to introduce Davie Osett more circumstantially to the reader, I shall not now violate the secrecy of our confidential communication.

I had stated to Mr Shearaway that I had formed no plan for my future line of life ; and therein I spoke the truth. But that uncertainty, for I will not call it irresolution, was not generated by indolence, nor did it arise from constitutional carelessness. I knew quite well that I had my own way to make in the world, and that I could not safely calculate upon any assistance. I knew to a penny the whole amount of my worldly possessions, which would not have sufficed to stock the most wretched farm, and on the interest of which I could not possibly live. It might suffice to pay my

entry fees to any one of the learned professions, but, having taken a deliberate survey of them all, I could not, by inclination, impulse, or attraction, specify any as my appointed Land of Goshen. The agency business was overdone—I had not in me enough of the bully to bluster my way at the bar, which is the secret of early, though not of enduring, success—I felt no attraction to medicine—I had no call to divinity. A father whose son was impregnated with such ideas, would have torn his hair with anguish—I, who was forced to be father to myself, experienced no such paroxysm. I had a firm faith that, some day or other, perhaps when I least expected it, I should find my proper occupation; but in the mean time I thought it exceedingly unwise to make a sacrifice of my youth, and to deprive myself of the opportunity of learning much more than could be acquired at any seat of academical education. I longed to see something more of the great world than Edinburgh could present to my view. I had an ambition to study the languages and literature, and behold the customs and manners of foreign nations; and to visit places of which I had read and dreamed, until they had assumed a palpable form in my imagination. If travel was considered advantageous to the young patrician or wealthy heir, was it not likely to be of even more benefit to me, already trained to habits of application and economy, and not liable to be assailed by those temptations, which, in spite of the vigilant care of tutors, beset the path of the young Englishman of fortune? As for the means, they were quite within

my power. I knew that, with proper care and caution, money would go a long way on the Continent ; and, on making a calculation, I found that I had quite enough money to enable me to travel and study, in the humble manner which I had proposed to myself, for at least five years to come. Nay, even that would not have exhausted my capital ; but I had a duty to perform to my best and earliest friend ; and I determined to leave untouched, in the hands of my guardian, a sum sufficient, when divided into annual payments, to secure some of the comforts which old age requires, for my own and my mother's nurse. At the Birkenshaws, Eppie Osett would again find a home ; but I could not allow her to go there as a dependant on the charity of her relations. All this I had revolved and matured in my own mind, before I opened the subject to any one ; for I had already contracted the habit of thinking and acting for myself—a habit which, I resolutely maintain, in the teeth of a thousand proverbs to the contrary, to be the secret of all success. God knows that advice, being a cheap article, can be had in plenty for the mere asking ! No man so unfriended but he can find ten or a dozen elderly or aged gentlemen who will act as gratuitous Mentors if he chooses to apply to them, for nothing is so gratifying to human vanity as implicit deference to opinion. But what is the result ? Simply this, that each sage, after giving you a prolix account of his own career, interspersed with interminable anecdotes of his ingenuity and forethought, ends by advising you to follow his example. I have often had advice

tendered me, in the way of suasion or otherwise, though I have rarely asked it ; and I vow to heaven that I can hardly recall an instance, bearing on any matter of importance affecting my progress in life, in which I would not have committed a serious error by departing from my own conviction. Our thoughts, aspirations, tendencies, idiosyncrasies, and instincts can only be known to ourselves—these, in their general combination, are our motive powers ; and by them we must act, and progress, and be practically influenced—but Mentor, when you go to him for advice, wise as he may look when tapping his snuff-box, regards all that as pure delusion and folly, or rather never takes it into account, because he supposes, and not without reason, that you wish to have a peep through his spectacles, instead of using your natural vision.

My guardian, or rather trustee, dear Ned Mather, with whom I had hitherto effected no settlement, did not pretend to be a Mentor. He merely opened his eyes under the bushy brows a little more widely than was his wont when I told him my determination ; but did all that was necessary in the way of pecuniary arrangement. Mr Shearaway hemmed and hawed, but made no active opposition.

“ Ye may be right, and ye may be wrong, Norman ; its not easy to say which. I’ve been myself so long in the harness, that I can think of nothing but the usual jog-trot—two stages *per diem*, forward and back, like the old horse in the mail-coach—but—God go wi’ ye, lad ! and if you should want a friend at home—for

though you are not likely to get into scrapes, it's aye of use to have a reference—write to Walter Shearaway."

Amidst universal expressions of good-will, I took leave of my old associates in the office ; and when I was about to embark in the steamer for London, Ned Mather, who had accompanied me on board, and taken infinite trouble in seeing my luggage disposed of, whispered to me this, affectionately wringing my hand,

"If ye hear of any grand fishing, Norman, where the trout average three pound, write to me, and, as sure as the yellow hackle beats the red in the beginning of May, I'll be with you in less than a fortnight !"

CHAPTER XI.

OUR SWISS COTTAGE.

IN some respects the medieval minstrel and student life, though unquestionably of a vagabond character, offered to the young and adventurous more charms, and even more advantages, than our present sedentary system. The time has been when the poet, furnished with a certificate or diploma from the Court of Arles setting forth his qualifications as an accredited master of the *joyeuse science*, could pass through Europe from castle to castle, unmolested even by marauding barons who allowed no such indemnity to the priesthood, and take his seat in every hall as a welcome and honoured guest. The time has been when the penniless but learned scholar was privileged to wander from University to University, and to claim from the corporation fund present support and the means of continuing his journey, by the simple process of affixing a thesis to the college gate, and defending his positions against the ingenuity of the practised wrangler. It was thus that poetry and learning "went gypsying a long time ago;" and the

practice was really an admirable one, because, in an age when letters were not generally cultivated, it kept up a perpetual intercourse between learned bodies, informed them of their mutual state, and gave the enterprising scholar an opportunity of visiting other countries besides his own. Oxford, I believe, has still a remnant of this in her one or two travelling fellowships; and the craftsmen of Germany, through their guilds, are forwarded from town to town. But otherwise the power to travel depends upon the amplitude of the purse; and the unprovided student who, nowadays, should be rash enough to attempt the experiment, would inevitably find himself in the predicament of worthy George Primrose, without, perhaps, that gentleman's last resource, a talent for scraping upon the violin.

There are, however, many ways of travelling. The millionaire, rolling from country to country in his well-poised English carriage, under the auspices of a bearded courier who sows gold by the handful, in all probability sees less, and has not more enjoyment, than the humbler wayfaring man, who contents himself with the diligence for long routes, and explores the more interesting districts on foot. It is not necessary to put up at the *Romischer Kaiser* or *Hôtel d'Angleterre*, when you can be well and more cheaply accommodated at the *Adler* or *Weisses Ross*; and good lodgings can be procured at a reasonable rate in almost every town on the Continent. For my own part, I travelled and sojourned as became my modest means; not as an idler, or as one bent on the pursuit of pleasure, but as a student

of arts and letters. My custom was to pass the winter and spring in some capital city or renowned seat of learning ; and during the finer portion of the year to resume my peregrinations. It may be thought that such a mode of life, pursued for a considerable period, might engender unsettled habits, and beget incapacity for strenuous exertion in the future. I believe that would be the result if the intellectual faculties were allowed to lie dormant, and no other ends proposed than the gratification of the senses and the enjoyment of refined society ; but I made it an imperative rule always to be engaged in some absorbing branch of study.

To me the recollections of travel afford quite as keen an enjoyment, and perhaps a more refined one, than did the reality. I can draw in my chair to the fireside of a winter's evening, when the snow is falling thickly but noiselessly without, only making its presence known by the hissing of the few flakes that find their way down the chimney, and in a minute's space transport myself to sunny Italy, or the tideless shores of the Mediterranean. I can see the olives of Attica glistening on the mount, or the gaily-painted barques that glide along the surface of the Golden Horn.

But I have no right to descant upon my years of pilgrimage. I intend to tell my story with as little interruption as possible ; and therefore I shall omit all narrative of my travels, adventures, encounters, and studies, during four years in various parts of the Continent. Pass to the fifth summer, when the period I

had originally fixed for my range of wandering had well-nigh expired, and I began to entertain serious thoughts of home, and what might await me there.

I am dwelling in a little cottage in Switzerland, in the very heart of the most beautiful district of that romantic region. I have not taken up my abode in a valley, for the deep shadows cast by the mountains oppress me. There the heat at noonday is stifling and intense; but when the sun passes over the top of the huge impending barrier, a piercingly cold wind, blowing from the wastes of rugged ice and untrodden snow, sweeps down the gorges, and in a few minutes effects a more decided change in the temperature of the air than we experience in a more level and less elevated country in the course of an autumnal month. My cottage lies up in the hills on the edge of an old pine-forest, through which the cattle stray, making its recesses musical with the sound of their tinkling bells. A little way below, through a ravine more than half screened with under-wood, runs a mountain-torrent, not too hoarse or obstreperous, but rising beyond murmur in its sound, which, taking its origin from the clearest and most pellucid, though not largest of the Swiss glaciers, rolls confidently along, till, reaching the barrier of the valley, some three miles beyond my dwelling, it falls over in a cataract of foam. From the upper window you see the glacier itself, bright blue, frosted with silver; and beyond it a green Alp, and over the Alp a white cone, stretching upwards as though it would pierce into the heavens—so radiant and dazzling does it appear. And,

from the same point of view, though further off, you descry three more stupendous horns, each of them worthy to be crowned with the glory of the Morning Star.

As for the cottage itself, it is, you see, light and picturesque, as Swiss cottages usually are, with wooden walls and a sloping roof, and rather more than the usual apology for a garden at the front. But my host, Hans Krauskopf, is not much of a horticulturist, nor indeed addicted to hard work of any kind; though, when a tempting offer presents itself, he has no objection to act in the capacity of a guide, and having once set his face to the road or mountain path, he will trudge along for twelve hours on a stretch with perfect good-humour and cheerfulness, bearing on his back a burden that might fatigue a creditable mule. But as a general rule, he very much prefers remaining at home, where, in the intervals of fumigation (for he is a persevering smoker), he employs himself in the manufacture of wooden toys, chamois-hair cockades, alpenstocks, and suchlike gear, for all which there is a ready market. His pretty buxom wife, Babili, despite the maternal anxieties entailed by the possession of three chubby children, is the most active creature in the world, always on the move, busy as a bee, and ever singing at her work. But Babili, though she professes to be fond of flowers, has no time for gardening; so that the parterre, being left very much to itself, lacks that nicety and trimness of arrangement which is the pride of an English cottage. The ground-floor is occupied by the family: the upper story

is, for the present, the habitation of my friend George Carlton and myself.

I must introduce the reader formally to George Carlton, for he is no ordinary character. George is one of the fortunate few who have not only sufficient wealth but sufficient abilities to enable them to embark in any career with almost the certainty of success. With a considerable fortune, a fine person, an acute and comprehensive intellect, extraordinary powers of memory, and a ready eloquence, he might, if he so pleased, have entered Parliament at an early age, where he speedily would have won a high place in public estimation. Such, at least, was the opinion of those who knew him best at Oxford; but, to their amazement, George not only showed himself indifferent to such a prospect, but absolutely refused to entertain it. Yet he was neither indolent nor without ambition. His chief fault was a certain haughtiness and impatience of control, which, no doubt, would have disqualified him from acting as a devoted adherent of any party in the State; for Carlton was not one of those easy-minded persons who will retract their opinions, and vote that black is white at the bidding of a political leader. His regard for truth in all matters of public import was so stern and inflexible, that he could make no allowance even for that tacit acquiescence to which timid men resort when they find themselves called upon to make a sacrifice of principle. He held the doctrine that to act against one's own convictions was a positive crime; and, firm in that faith, he would not have hesitated to defy the world.

Carlton had a decided tendency towards literature ; though, if he had published anything before I made his acquaintance, he did not think fit to reveal it ; and he had even a stronger passion for art. Indeed, he was a painter of no small accomplishment, and had zealously studied as a pupil under one of the first masters of Munich. It was there that I made his acquaintance, which ripened into an intimacy when we subsequently met at Florence ; and on quitting the latter city, both of us intending shortly to return to England, we had agreed to spend a few months together in the wilds of Switzerland, and lighted upon comfortable quarters in the cottage of Hans Krauskopf.

With this explanation, reader, you may enter our apartment. There, at his easel, surrounded by the multifarious paraphernalia of a painter, sits George Carlton ; whilst I, wearied with the perusal of a heavy German tome, am lounging on the settee, inhaling the delicious aromatic air which enters by the open casement. At my feet, and watching me with his clear, loving, intelligent eye, lies couched my constant companion Lion, a magnificent Newfoundland dog, the sole survivor from the wreck of an unfortunate ship that two years before was cast away on the rocky shore of Palermo. I happened to be there when the storm took place ; and on hearing of the catastrophe, though not until several hours after it had occurred, I went down to the beach, impelled by that strange curiosity which attracts every one towards the scene of recent misfortune. It was a melancholy sight. The vessel had gone to pieces

on a reef of rocks which ran out a considerable distance from the shore, and scarce a vestige of her hull was visible amidst the white surges that came roaring and tumbling in. Spars, planks, and even bales, were cast up in large quantities, and the fishermen and country-folk, ever ready there as elsewhere to profit by the spoils of the sea, were eagerly engaged in dragging, beyond the reach of the waves, every article that came within their reach. It was rather a dangerous matter for a stranger to make particular inquiries from men so employed; more especially as each one carried in his girdle, after the pleasant Sicilian fashion, a knife of formidable dimensions; and I was perfectly aware that the people no longer displayed that Arcadian gentleness and soft amenity which is pictured in the idylls of Theocritus. Without altogether denying the existence of an Acis among them, I must say that the demeanour and gestures of the islanders were such as to induce the belief that they were genuine descendants of Polyphemus. However, apart from the throng, I found a Galatæa in the person of a pretty sunburnt Sicilian maiden, who from an eminence was watching the proceedings with much interest; her lover—it mattered not whether he most resembled the shepherd or the Cyclops—being doubtless in the thickest of the plunder. From her I learned that no bodies had been cast ashore—a singular circumstance, as it appeared very unlikely that the crew would have betaken themselves to their boats in such a raging sea, before the vessel struck upon the reef. Avoiding the crowd, I

walked on until I reached a little bay, into which an eddy had swept some fragments of the wreck. As I was musing on the piteous spectacle, which brought forcibly to my mind that splendid description by Jeremy Taylor, the first of our English divines, of a like scene of shipwreck, I was startled by a low whine and the touch of something cold upon my hand. I hastily turned round, and there, shivering and wet, and moaning as if he besought protection, was a young dog, evidently quite a pup, who looked up into my face with an expression so imploring, that language could not better have conveyed a meaning. It said, "Master! I am a poor thing that has been cast away—there is no one left to care for me or give me food—I am cold, wet, and hungry—do, dear master, take me with you, and I will love you all my life!" I was not proof against such dumb eloquence; so I spoke kindly to the dog, who seemed to recognise my speech as that to which he had been accustomed, and fondled him; and he followed me back to Palermo, and ever since has been my devoted friend and servant. These may seem strong terms to use towards a dog; but I am one of those who thoroughly sympathise with the attachment of the Bedouen Arab to his horse, and that of the Indian mohaut for his elephant. Your familiar friend of the human species may betray and desert you—your dog never will. His love for his master is unbounded; his fidelity beyond the reach of corruption.

Having thus introduced the reader to the group in

our Swiss cottage, I shall close this chapter. I do so the more readily, because I have fallen into the literary snare of adopting the present tense, which leads into inextricable difficulty; and I wish to recur to the more rational and natural style of narrative, which maintains the proper distinction between the present and the past. Pardon, therefore, this interpolated Photograph, and allow me to fall back on my memoranda.

CHAPTER XII.

THE AVALANCHE.

“CARLTON,” said I, “if it were not for a certain remorse I feel in interrupting the task you ply so diligently, I would propose to you a stroll along the mountain-side. The day is delicious, and under so bright a sun I am sure we shall see the slide of an avalanche.”

“Two minutes more, and I am at your service,” said Carlton, working away at the head of a Saint Agnes; for, as I have already said, his tendencies were towards high art, and in that region Catholicity rules supreme.

I rose and looked over his shoulder.

“A very successful effort! It seems as if a sunbeam were entangled in the fair flowing locks. But, Carlton, why do you always portray the same face, and in the same style? All your female heads have wonderful similarity—all are calm and pensive, with dovelike eyes, and an air of dreamy reverie. Our Florentine friend Sostegno used to say that one can always learn something of the true character of a painter from his

works ; but such a picture as this does not seem to embody yours."

"Then Sostegno made a false criticism. An artist does not copy from himself—he portrays what he most admires in others. What you see is my faint attempt to shadow out my Ideal—the Saxon type of beauty—sweetness, confidence, and truth."

"Your Ideal, then, is but an exalted image of the Real?"

"Exalted! My good friend, you are pleased to be very complimentary. Do you think it was within the compass of the powers even of a Raphael to exalt the Madonna? Believe it not. Ineffably celestial was the vision that passed before him, nor could he adequately have transferred it to canvass had he painted with the pencil of an angel. But as for my daubs—bah! They are of the earth, earthy—cold, lifeless personifications, not one whit better than, nor perhaps so good as nine-tenths of those things in gilded frames that cumber the walls of our exhibition-rooms."

"I would not hear your enemy say that, Carlton. You may not have that practice in art which constitutes the master ; but genius, which I take to be the main requisite, you possess in no common measure."

"Do not, I beseech you, Sinclair, profane that noble word. Genius is the rarest gift of God, though every fool that can scribble a few verses, or disfigure a foot or two of canvass with his glaring colours, believes that it has been vouchsafed to him, and arrogantly boasts of its possession. I cannot tell you how often I have

sickened to hear pert puny whipsters and slovenly egotistical rogues prate about their neglected genius, and the shameful indifference of the world in not instantly recognising their merits. My firm belief is, that, in the present times, true genius, unless fearfully abused, must force its way; and I believe, moreover, that the few men, the very few who possess that incomparable gift, are themselves the last to be aware of it. But come. The avalanches will not wait for us, and we can talk more pleasantly under shadow of the pines."

So we three sallied forth—Carlton, myself, and Lion—the latter, according to custom, making a feigned assault upon Babili's favourite he-goat, who received him as a pikeman would a charge of cavalry. It was a standing joke, which seemed to lose none of its zest by daily repetition; for the two animals were in reality fast friends, and had many a romp and gambol when they thought that nobody was looking on.

Our path led us first through the pine forest, in the glades of which the cattle were browsing; then upwards over a sunny slope, to a *plateau*, right opposite the stupendous horn which I have described in the foregoing chapter, and separated from it only by a valley which, though it appeared narrow to the eye, was in reality of the breadth of several miles. In that valley, however, surveyed from our point of view, there were no cottages, or traces of cultivation such as one might expect to see in a country where arable land, for the most part to be found in the low places, is in the utmost request. As we read in the old fairy tale that

no peasant dared to build his hut, or yoke his steer, or till the ground in the precincts of the district belonging to the capricious and malevolent giant, so the hardest Switzer would not venture to locate himself at the foot of this weird monarch of the Alps. Sheer up from the valley, for some thousand feet, rose an impassable barrier of precipitous rocks, scarred, seamed, and crossed by fearful ledges, on which not even the foot of the chamois had ever rested. And from this precipice, without the intervention here of any green slope or pasture, arose the dazzling horn, tapering into the deep-blue sky.

I do not know how other men may feel, but to me the grand scenery of Switzerland has always conveyed an impression of the deepest awe, resembling in some degree the sensation which arises when we contemplate a furious storm, like that which Shakespeare has figured—

“ Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up;
Though bladed corn be lodged, and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken——”

There is grandeur in the romantic scenery of other lands, but it is commonly associated with the idea of repose. There is silence on the mountain and the glen, still and glassy is the wide expanse of the lake, the woods scarce tremble in the breeze, and the voice

of the stream sounds like the gentle murmur or breath of nature in its sleep. But in Switzerland there is no silence, or at best it is the hush that precedes the storm. Even Night, the queen of silence, cannot enforce her mandate there; for if you wander forth when the moon is at her height, and all her attendant sapphires gleaming and glistening around—long after the last crimson flush of evening has faded away, and long before the rose of dawn lights up the mountain peaks while the valleys are still swathed in darkness—though there is no wind to stir the foliage, and no muffled sound of a cataract reaches the ear—you will hear far off, from the desert wastes, a hollow inarticulate moan, an ineffable and mysterious wail, as if nature shuddered under some awful load, and was uttering a pent sigh for its release. That is the voice of the never-resting glaciers, which day and night crawl down towards the valleys, grinding the rocks that are their basement, or wrenching them from their deep foundation. So all night long there is silence in heaven, while the earth is moaning in its caves.

It is not, however, the lady moon, but the sun, the fertiliser, the life-giver, the great source of energy, that wakes the thunders of the Alps. Fiercely beat the beams upon the sides of the snow mountain, the vast accumulations of a long and dreary winter; and although the frost has long held the masses in his gripe, and refused to let them go, even he must yield to the power that invigorates and releases the world.

“There, indeed,” said Carlton, as we sat down to

rest ourselves on the slope, "is a spectacle that sets imitative art at defiance! But why speak of art—poor art—when nature lies so vast before us? Tell me, Sinclair—if you had been born and reared in such a region, would you be content to forego all this for such a life as men lead in the crowded cities?"

"The question is a difficult one to answer. It is well known that the mountaineer ever pines for his native hills; but without cities, Carlton, where would have been civilisation?"

"You answer, like a true Scot, by putting another question. Don't blame me if I follow your example, and ask what precise meaning you attach to the word civilisation?"

"I never was an adept in definitions, Carlton; and you shall not betray me into an attempt to explain a general term."

"O then you decline controversy! Now do you really think it reasonable to expect that I should sit here, as in a Professor's chair, and lecture you, *ex cathedrâ*, upon points of social economy?"

"Why not, most sapient philosopher? You could not find anywhere a more splendid theatre; and as for audience, fit though few, Lion and I will listen with exemplary patience."

"Well, then," said Carlton, "if I must needs hold forth to so cynical a class, though honest Lion there looks as if he would much prefer a scamper, listen and perpend. I hold it a gross mistake to maintain that cities have the monopoly of civilisation. I grant you

that they exercise a large influence in promoting it ; for as market-towns are necessary to districts for the purpose of trade, barter, and interchange, so are cities necessary to countries for the higher purposes of education, refinement, art, and intellectual intercourse. In cities alone can we find universities, academies, libraries, museums, galleries, and institutions, either for the advancement of science or the regulation of society. A city is the heart of a country ; and so long as the blood passes through the heart, and is again discharged to supply the body, the whole system is made healthy. But if cities are to absorb and not restore—if they are to drain the country much, and to refund but little—I cannot help thinking that they will not promote, but rather will repress, civilisation.”

“Your remarks appear rational enough, Carlton, but I hardly see their drift.”

“This it is. I view with much uneasiness the increasing tendency in our own beloved England towards settlement in towns, and more especially in London. Our life is daily becoming more and more feverish. Throughout all classes of society I perceive a craving for excitement, a restlessness, and a competition which sooner or later must have a disastrous issue. London has swollen to a size quite enormous compared with the population of the country. More than an eighth part of the whole people of England and Wales harbour within its boundaries. The wealthy flock thither because London offers to them unbounded luxury and enjoyment. The ambitious seek it because they think

that there alone their talents can be appreciated and rewarded. Even the poor go there, impelled by the same might that drives wreck and sea-weed into the vortex of the whirlpool. Many go, but few return. And from this I argue that ere many years pass by, London, mighty in itself, will absorb the greater part of the wealth, energy, and intellect of the nation, and become, what Paris is to France, a dictatorial power instead of an administrative metropolis. But hark—see yonder!”

A deep sullen roar from the opposite side of the valley vibrated on the ear. The cattle near us ceased to feed, and huddled together, terrified by the awful sound to which no use could accustom their senses. Looking in the direction which Carlton had indicated, I saw, descending from the foot of the white cone, a vast cataract, which, falling sheer down over the precipice for a thousand feet, without break or stay, till it lighted on a lower ledge, sent up a storm of spray, and resolved itself into an icefield, suspended as it were in middle air. Then, when the upper slope of snow had exhausted itself, there was a brief pause and silence, until the accumulated mass gave way, and descended in a second cataract; this time bearing with it huge stones and masses of rock to the valley, into which, with a deafening roar, and a shock that made the earth tremble, it discharged its hideous ruin.

“Many a smiling homestead has been buried beneath such awful avalanches as these!” said Carlton. “A merciless tyrant is that old white-headed despot of the

Alps, asserting his state and solitary supremacy by showering desolation on the fields. From yonder icy waste lying over what a minute ago was green pasture-land, a poet or poetic historian might derive an apt hint for illustrating the career of that grand Poliorcetes, Napoleon ; who, by the way, not content with smiling France and sunny Italy, sent his legions into this unprofitable region. But let us move homewards. The day is on the wane ; and it is enough to have witnessed one such spectacle as this."

"Let us, however, go round by the glacier. I know another path which will lead us to it ; and I want to show you a little plot of flowers, quite an Alpine prairie, which I have discovered near its margin."

"Agreed. And now let us resume our conversation. Do you know why I spoke so strongly about London and a city life?"

"I presume you spoke from conviction. Of London itself I know personally little, but I doubt not that what you said is true."

"You may rely upon the truth of it, Sinclair ; but I am not a man to mouth truisms without a purpose. Look you—here are we two, both young fellows, who have been roaming about the world for several years, picking up knowledge as we best can, but certainly not following any of the paths which are prescribed for the enterprising and ambitious. Chance brings us together ; we form a mutual friendship, and ascertain each other's views ; and lo, we find that we are both caught in the vortex, and that our ultimate destination

is London. No doubt it is natural enough that I should go to London, even to plunge into nothingness ; for although I have, heaven help me ! no career, for which probably I have myself to blame, my nearest relatives reside there, and I have a tolerable circle of acquaintances. But you, Sinclair, if I have thoroughly understood your frank confidences, have no friends there, and no interest to push you forward. You make no secret that fortune has not smiled upon you yet ; by which I mean simply that the jade with the wheel has not given you the purse of Fortunatus. So, without being inquisitive, I would fain ask what you purpose to do in London ? ”

“ I might answer by referring you to the story of Dick Whittington. But, seriously, I repect your friendship too much to conceal anything from you. I am not quite without a London connection. When I left Scotland a few years ago, a raw lad, with barely such finances as might enable me to prosecute a line of study which I had marked out, I did not abandon the hope that, as my mind became matured, I might turn what little ability I have to some account. I knew very well that that was not to be done by absolute seclusion ; for valuable as is the world of books, the living world around us is even more deserving of study. If I had wished only to read and hold commerce with the past, I might as well have remained in an Edinburgh attic, whereof many may be rented at an easy rate. But I desired likewise to know the present, and therefore I have not withdrawn myself from society.

Well—it so happened that more than two years ago I was enabled, through the good offices of an influential friend, with whom I became acquainted at Vienna, to form a connection with a leading journal in London——”

“Bravo! Then I have the honour of addressing a special correspondent?”

“Precisely so—and without unduly exalting the importance of our unrecognised diplomatic corps, I venture to assert that the British public could ill afford to dispense with our services.”

“A modest estimate of your value!” said Carlton. “Really, I ought to apologise for my presumption. I have heard it said that a Scot is as sure to fall on his feet, as a cat when thrown from an upper story; and, on my life, I begin to think that the adage is literally true.”

“Alas!” said I; “All my good fortune simply amounts to this, that I am able to earn a crust. But why should I complain? I have sufficient for my daily wants—I am young and strong—and I can push my way like others. I am ready to work, without much caring what the work may be, so that it is not of a degrading kind. Making no pretensions to genius, I am not likely to meet with any severe disappointment—therefore will I to London.”

“But why not return to Edinburgh? Surely you might find there an adequate field for your exertions.”

“You do not know Edinburgh, Carlton. I have renounced professional life, and beyond that pale I see

no chance of succeeding in Scotland. I might perhaps be appointed factor on some large estate, or procure a petty situation in a public office, but such are not the things that I covet. It may be true, as you say, that London is overgrown, and that it has absorbed too much from the provinces. But it is in vain to struggle against facts. Rightfully or wrongfully, London has become the mighty controlling centre of Britain, and thither will go all those who, without strong local ties, professional engagements, or deep-rooted associations, have a desire to better their fortunes. Scotland does not produce vines and fig-trees, under the shadow of which men can lie and meditate at leisure. She is a rough nursing-mother who, being somewhat straitened in domestic circumstances, is fain to send her children out to service. It is an old peculiarity which we inherit from our ancestors the Norsemen."

"And what if you fail in London?"

"I am not arrogant enough to answer in the words of Lady Macbeth—

'But screw our courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail——'

I have been taught to believe that, act as we may, there is a Providence to guide and sustain us; and having full confidence in the goodness of God, and bowing with perfect submission to His will, I am ready to take whatever fortune may be allotted to me. But still it is the duty of a man to use every possible exertion. Should I not have strength or talent enough

to make my way amidst the throng and press of London, India and the colonies lie beyond."

"My dear Sinclair, I admire and respect your courage. Now look here. Since you are bent upon pushing your fortune in London, for which attempt, indeed, you have assigned good reasons, the great thing is to have a fair start. I cannot do much to aid you, for my existence hitherto has been of a dreamy and speculative kind, and I have not sufficiently cultivated relations with men who are the dispensers of patronage. But I can offer you a home in London."

"Thank you, Carlton, heartily; but I feel that I must work out the experiment for myself. The soldier who begins a campaign should before all things learn how to dispense with the aid of others; and I don't intend to commence my career by deliberately quartering myself upon a friend."

"Nonsense, man!" replied Carlton. "I tell you I have a house there, large enough to accommodate a patriarchal family, and, save a couple of domestics, not a soul to inhabit it but myself."

"Then follow the example of the patriarchs," said I. "Purvey thee a wife as speedily as may be, and make the dismal house vocal with the voices of children. Your offer, kind as it is, I cannot accept, for I have an insuperable objection to become a *sorner*, which is the Scottish name for an individual who preys upon his neighbour's substance."

"So then, Sinclair, among your other good qualities you rank that of obstinacy?"

“Else were I no true Scot! Why, man—obstinacy is our privilege, our heritage, our best possession. It is part and parcel of our nature. We have an obstinate soil to subdue, obstinate seas to stem, obstinate winds to encounter—and, let me add, we are not unfrequently compelled to combat the obstinate prejudices of our neighbours, who have no such legitimate excuses for their obstinacy.”

“A very pretty harangue in defence of national mulishness! But do you, Sinclair, in your own person, prove a little more reasonable; and if you will not at once agree to, at least think over my proposal.”

“Well then, let us postpone consideration thereof in the mean time; and I may safely promise you a definite answer before the arrival of the Greek Kalends. But now we must take this path to the right through the copse-wood. It will conduct us directly to the glacier.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GLACIER.

JUST as we were emerging from the dingle, we heard a loud protracted cry, repeated once and again.

“What can that mean?” said I.

“’Tis Hans Krauskopf bellowing to his bull,” replied Carlton. “The fellow has the lungs of a Stentor.”

“You are wrong, Carlton! That is the voice of some one in pain or distress. Let us hasten on. Pray God that no accident has happened on the glacier!”

We ran hurriedly forward, till we reached the edge of the frozen mass. A little way up we saw a man frantically gesticulating and waving his hat; and with a hilloa, by way of assurance that aid was at hand, we climbed up towards him as rapidly as the slippery surface would permit.

He was standing by the side of a crevasse or slit in the glacier which sloped downward at a sharp angle into the icy depths, the edges like livid lips overlapping the fearful gulf. A cap and a broken Alpine pole lay beside.

“What has happened?” cried Carlton and I together.

“Oh, gentlemen, what is to be done?” cried the Englishman—for such we recognised him to be—wringing his hands; “my young friend, in attempting to leap, missed his footing, and has slid down into that cleft!”

“Merciful Heaven!” said I, “it is a crevasse that goes through the glacier! How long is it since he fell?”

“Ten minutes or more. I dared not leave the place, lest I should not be able to find it again.”

“Have you heard any sounds? Did he give a cry?”

“He gave one cry just as he disappeared, but none other. I once thought I heard a groan, but the rush of water below may have deceived me. O my God! how shall I tell this to his father?”

“Let us get ropes,” said Carlton, “and summon Hans Krauskopf. I fear it will be of little use, but at any rate we shall know the worst.”

“Stay,” said I; “you say there is a rush of water down below? Let me listen.”

I bent towards the chasm, and heard distinctly the noise of a running stream, at a considerable depth, doubtless, but not so very far down as utterly to preclude the hope that the young man might have survived the fall. But I heard nothing else; and the curvature of the crevasse was such as to render a descent even with the aid of ropes extremely perilous.

“Perhaps,” said I, “it may be possible to get at

him in another way. The stream below is evidently that which flows from the glacier through ice-caves which I have entered but never penetrated. This chasm cannot be more than sixty or seventy feet deep, and from the bottom of it to the place where the stream issues, the distance is not great. Possibly the ice may be so worn that a man can make his way up the stream."

"Heaven bless you for saying so, dear young gentleman! Do try!" said the agonised stranger.

"Why not go yourself?" said Carlton bluntly.

"Hush, George! Don't you see his nerves are utterly unstrung? Besides, he does not know the way. I will make the attempt. There is little danger, after all, for the stream is shallow."

"Nay, replied Carlton, "if one of us must go, let me have the preference."

"No, no! Stay you here, or rather stay at the mouth of the cave. I know the glacier better than you. This is my adventure; besides, I have an efficient auxiliary, who will follow none but me. Come, Lion!"

I verily believe that the noble animal thoroughly comprehended what had occurred, for during this hurried conference he had been peering about the crevasse, scenting the air, and once or twice uttered a low whine of impatience, which seemed to me a favourable omen. For such is the marvellous instinct of some dogs of high breeding, that, if brought to the vicinity of a dead body, they will sit down and utter a mourn-

ful howl, which they never do while life remains, even though the senses are dormant. Lion understood me at once, and bounded along direct to the caves of the glacier.

It was here that I had once ventured in, though cautioned by my host against doing so; for there is always danger that some huge block of ice may become disengaged from the majestic ceiling. But I could not resist the temptation of witnessing a spectacle more wonderful than the cave of Aladdin, and well was I repaid for my pains. The only path lies up the channel of the stream, which makes a considerable bend or deflection not far from the outer aperture; so that you presently lose all benefit of the light of day, save what is refracted through the medium of the solid ice. Then you pass into an enchanted atmosphere. Looking up through the stupendous vault, the colours are of hyalite deepening into cerulean blue; looking inwards, you might think that the heart of the glacier was a mass of lapis-lazuli, so intensely dark is the hue. But the strangest thing is the total loss on the part of him who enters of the power of calculating distance in those caves, for you cannot tell with certainty whether the ice-wall is close to you or many feet beyond your reach, and you are forced to grope your way onward by the touch. On my first exploratory visit I had not gone much further than the point where the stream deflected, but now I was determined to push onward as far as I possibly could—the excitement of the moment, and the hope of saving the life of a fellow

creature, having taken from my mind all thought of personal danger.

Restraining Lion as well as I could—for he was exceedingly desirous to press onward—I entered the cave, and found, to my great satisfaction, that there was not much water in the channel. Holding my breath, and stooping low to avoid striking against the roof or any projecting pinnacle, I soon made considerable progress along this singular gallery, the light, however, becoming more and more obscure as I advanced. My chief fear had been lest I should find the stream towards the interior of the glacier falling over rocky ledges which it would be impossible to surmount, but nothing of that kind appeared. I never had to wade above the knee; and I could hear no rumble like that of a formidable cascade. Strange to say, though surrounded by ice, the heat was most oppressive. I was literally bathed with perspiration, and felt giddy from the closeness of the air.

At last I was brought up by a barrier of solid ice, the opening through which was not more than three feet in height. It was plain that I could go no further; and I confess that, for a moment or two, I hesitated about trying the last resource, which was to allow Lion to attempt the passage. I say allow, for the generous creature evidently desired to press forward; and but for his habitual submission to my will, would have done so without any sign. But I read his desire in his eye; and though I feared greatly that he never might come back to me, I felt that I must make

the sacrifice. I believe that I cried as I gave him what I thought might be a last caress ; and the noble dog, placing his fore-paws on my breast, licked my face, as if to reassure me, and then, with perfect confidence, entered the narrow tunnel.

As for me, I sat down, half stupified, on a block of ice, and waited I know not how long. Time as well as distance seemed to be confounded in that marvelous region. For a long while I heard nothing but the rush of the stream through the curve of the glacier ; yet the nerves of my ear were strained to their utmost tension, and the absence of all other sound amounted almost to agony. At last I heard distinctly—clearly, but afar off within the bowels of the icy mountain, a bark—perhaps the most grateful sound that ever reached me, for by it I knew that Lion had succeeded in his mission, and that the youth was found. More than that—I knew by its tone that the boy was still alive—but how was he to be rescued from that terrible danger? Could he pass down the narrow passage worn through the glacier, even with the help of Lion? It was evident that from the fall he must have sustained great injury, and even become insensible, else he would have answered the cries of his comrade ; and if a limb were broken, how could he follow the stream? I began to think that I had done rashly in rejecting the advice of Carlton, and that by such rashness a human life might be lost. Still, I knew enough of the glacier to be aware that the crevasse, which was a new one, might have contracted so as to render descent impos-

sible before assistance could be procured. All I could do was to utter a fervent prayer to the Almighty for aid in that perilous juncture.

The prayer was answered. Again I heard a bark much nearer, and it seemed indicative of success. Had it been an appeal for help, I should, at any hazard, have tried the passage. But it was clear and confident. For another period I remained on the rack, and then I heard distinctly other sounds than the rushing of the stream. Nearer and nearer they came: and at length Lion emerged from the passage, supporting, but most carefully, so that the head should be above the stream, the seemingly inanimate body of a young lad, in the collar of whose jacket his teeth were fixed. I have never felt, save then, a tendency to absolute hysteria; but I hardly had the power to take the boy in my arms, and commence the descent. Lion, like a true hero, surrendered his charge to me; simply giving himself a very comprehensive shake, and looking at me, with his tongue hanging from his mouth, from violent exertion; but claiming no merit for what he had done, beyond performance of his master's will. Tried by the standard of the dog's fidelity, how many statesmen and warriors would be convicted of perfidy and cowardice!

With much difficulty, for my nerves had been severely shaken, I conveyed my burden to the mouth of the cave, where I was greeted by Carlton and the stranger with an exclamation of joy. Laying the boy upon the grass, we proceeded to examine what injury he had received,

and soon found that he still breathed, and that his pulse beat, though very feebly. There was a deep cut on the temple from which the blood was oozing slowly, and the bone in the upper joint of his right arm appeared to be fractured.

“What course of action would you propose under the circumstances, gentlemen?” said the stranger; “I feel in considerable perplexity without exactly comprehending the precise nature of the dilemma. One thing is evident, that immediate medical assistance must be procured, and that of the ablest kind, the rank of the patient rendering the consideration of the honorarium a matter of perfect indifference.”

“Are you out of your senses, sir?” said Carlton impatiently. “The first thing you must do is to have the boy put to bed. Fortunately our cottage is at no great distance. He will be well lodged there. I will go in search of assistance, and return in less than twenty minutes.”

“The exigency of the occasion,” said the stranger, who, now that his more startling fear had been dispelled, spoke with the accuracy of a pedant, “must dispense with ceremony; neither will it admit of those particular inquiries as to the nature of the cottage you have indicated, and the character of its inmates, which, under other circumstances, I, as travelling tutor and temporary guardian of the young nobleman who has sustained this grievous accident, would have deemed it my duty to institute.”

But before he could conclude the sentence, Carlton,

with something that sounded very like an oath, had disappeared, and I was occupied in bathing the temples of the boy with water.

“A most impetuous young man!” muttered the stranger. “Evidently not one of those who have been subjected to strict academic discipline. But I suppose allowance must be made for eccentricities in those pathless wilds. You, sir,” said he, addressing himself to me, “appear to have some skill in surgical practice. May I inquire if you are a licentiate of medicine?”

“I am not a licentiate,” said I, “and I pretend to no skill, beyond knowing that cold water is the best application in the present instance; for phlebotomy is not to be thought of, even if I had a lancet.”

“Phlebotomy? Aha! The use of that term proves that you are at least familiar with the nomenclature of science. Now I myself am a doctor, though not of medicine. Daniel Dovering is my name, and my degree is that of D.D.”

“Then, Dr Dovering, I beg to entreat that you will bear a hand. Loosen the boy’s neckcloth; and support him on your knee, till I fetch more water from the stream.”

“Willingly,” replied the Doctor. “The rather that the mode of treatment you suggest recommends itself to my understanding by its almost primitive simplicity. My poor bleeding pupil—my gentle injured boy!

I did not tarry for the remainder of the highly original quotation.

On my return with the water, I found the Doctor leaning over his charge, and indulging in a husky soliloquy.

“Yes!” said he; “the nearest parallel with which I can charge my memory is that of Hylas ravished by the water-nymphs. Those ice-caverns have a close resemblance to the sparry grotto; and I, like Hercules, have witnessed and bemoaned his fate. Truly a most excellent subject for a poem in the elegiac metre!”

“Nay, Doctor,” said I; “let us hope there may be no occasion for any such laments. I cannot think that the boy has sustained a very serious injury.”

“That also is my hope, though the tremor which now possesses my limbs could hardly be subdued by the divine assurances even of a Machaon or a Podalirius. But I must not forget that to you, individually, a cordial acknowledgment is due. We—in which plural I comprehend many individuals of exalted rank and influential position—owe you much for the singular gallantry which you have this day displayed, in rescuing from destruction a young and interesting scion of a noble English house. In saving the life of the Honourable Alfred Spencer, you have secured for your future career, in whatever direction that may tend, the powerful patronage of the Right Honourable the Earl of Windermere.”

“Spare your thanks, Doctor,” said I. “I would have run the same risk to aid any fellow-creature in

such extremity. After all, if you feel any obligation, you are less indebted to me than to my dog. Without him, I never should have succeeded in extricating your pupil from the glacier."

"Indeed! He certainly is a very fine animal. Perhaps you would be inclined to part with him?"

"Really, sir," said I, somewhat testily, "you take a very strange way of evincing what you are pleased to call your gratitude! Not all the gold in the world would tempt me to part with my companion; and your offer, if I am to construe it as such, is little short of an insult."

"Nay, young man," replied the pedant, "if you take it so warmly, dread no further solicitation on my part. Trust me, I meant no offence, for, unless my memory greatly deceives me, I have more than once heard of bargainings and interchanges among our academical youth of bull-dogs, terriers, and suchlike pugnacious and pestilent creatures. Not that I mean to confound with such mongrels this really magnificent and sagacious animal, doubtless of the breed of the Molossi, to whom this day it would be most ungrateful to apply the line of the poet—

'Sæpe canis frustra nemorosus montibus errat.'"

"Hush—the boy is reviving. See—he opens his eyes."

"Mother!" was the first word he uttered. Mother! —the word thrilled me, who had no living mother, for

it showed how deeply rooted in the bosom of the boy was the purest and holiest affection of our nature.

“Where am I?” he said again. “What has happened to me? Is that you, Dr Dovering?”

“It is indeed, Mr Spencer, your ever-watchful instructor, friend, and guardian! Most fervently do I return thanks to Providence for this remarkable deliverance!”

“But what has happened, Doctor? I feel very much hurt, and my head is dizzy. Surely I have had a bad fall—Oh I remember now—that horrible glacier!”

“Don’t agitate yourself,” said I; “you must keep quiet for the present, and you shall know all hereafter. And here in good time comes Carlton with assistance.”

With the aid of Hans Krauskopf, and another stout mountaineer, who were prodigal in their exclamations of sympathy for the poor young English boy, we brought him to the cottage, and had him put immediately to bed. A messenger was sent off for the nearest surgeon, who, allured by the prospect of British gold, made his appearance with wonderful celerity, considering the distance he had to traverse; and we had the satisfaction of receiving his assurance, that beyond a simple fracture of the bone, which might be expected speedily to knit, the young gentleman had sustained no material injury.

“I may say, however,” added the surgeon, an honest German from Heidelberg, “that during the twelve years I have resided among the mountains, I never heard of

so wonderful an escape. Seldom indeed do the glaciers release their prey. The people here believe that the ice-mountains are haunted by a sort of malignant Trolchs, who decoy the unwary to their ruin ; and this instance of emergence from the cave will be quoted as an absolute miracle."

CHAPTER XIV.

LAST HOURS IN SWITZERLAND.

THANKS to youth and a sound constitution, our patient made a rapid recovery, and in a few days after the accident occurred, was able to go about with his arm in a sling. The reception of our guests certainly caused some commotion in the cottage ; for, as we could not well separate Dr Dowering from his charge, we were obliged to surrender our bedrooms, and make shift, as we best could, in the apartment which we dignified with the title of the studio. Well contented should we have been with that restriction, had not the intolerable Dowering, whom we immediately discovered to be a bore of the most stupendous dimensions, considered it his duty to cultivate both our acquaintance and our intellects. He evidently regarded us as two young men of tolerable capacity but neglected education, whom he was bound to patronise ; and acting upon this idea, he inflicted his company upon us at breakfast, dinner, and supper, monopolising the conversation as ruthlessly as if he had been Dr Samuel Johnson seated in the Mitre, or the still more arrogant Dr Parr.

We might have borne this patiently enough if the man had confined himself to simple prosing; but he had somehow or other taken it into his head that we were in want of money; and though not venturing to tender a sum by way of direct payment for services rendered, he was constantly devising means for making us partake of his bounty as almoner and dispenser for the Earl. For Lion, as I have already hinted, he would have given any price; and had I acknowledged myself to be an author in embryo, I doubt not that he would have paid down a sum, much larger than any publisher would have ventured, for any sort of manuscript, without being at all particular as to its intrinsic quality. With some difficulty I succeeded in making him understand that I neither sought nor would accept of any pecuniary acknowledgment; and as I did not profess to be an artist, he could not even resort to the delicate method of giving me an order for a picture. Carlton, however, did not escape. The Doctor saw him at work on the easel, and straightway resolved to advance the fortunes of that promising Apelles.

It so happened that Dr Dovering had expressed, *inter pocula*, his regret that the pencil of Landseer could not be engaged to represent the scene at the cavern. Partly because I thought the idea a good one, and partly because I wished to get rid of the importunities of the man, I persuaded Carlton to attempt a sketch; but though he produced a very good likeness of the boy, he had no practice in canine portraiture, and did not succeed in giving a satisfactory representation

of Lion. The truth is, that my friend George, as I have already hinted, was happiest in his female heads ; but as all of these had a wonderful similarity, I was privately of opinion that his Ideal, about which he was fond of expatiating, had somewhere or other a local habitation and a name, and that he, being a painter, was performing the duty or sweet penance of a devoted lover, by depicting the charms of his mistress on canvass, just as a poet would have celebrated them in his verse. But Carlton was not one of those men "who wear their heart upon their sleeve, for daws to peck at." In everything that regarded his own feelings or affections he was singularly reserved ; and of course I had no desire to penetrate any of his secrets.

The sketch of young Spencer and Lion was, however, very nearly the cause of a violent quarrel. Dr Dowering could not be brought to understand that a gentleman might prosecute art solely for his own amusement and gratification. The Doctor, with all his pedantry, was in some respects a practical man. He had no notion of your poor student, or mere literary grub. Study, in his eyes, was only commendable in so far as it led to benefices and promotion ; but as for the notion of a man cultivating his intellect, or cramming himself with the accumulated lore of centuries, without any ulterior object, the Doctor could not away with it. Nay, upon that subject he sometimes waxed absolutely grandiloquent, denouncing study for the sake of learning alone as something Jesuitical, savouring of the Romish heresy, and tending towards monastic seclusion. He was no

advocate for the practice of concealing lights under a bushel. He held the doctrine that all talent should look out for a market, and he fortified that view with arguments of considerable weight, proceeding, as he loved to say, by way of *παράδειγμα* or example.

“Thus,” said the Doctor, in a remarkably fine discourse which he delivered one evening, when the contents of the third bottle of Neufchâtel were beginning to disappear, “if you subtract worldly, that is, interested motives, where are your springs of action? Let us begin with the highest order in the State, the Hierarchy. What but the hope of a bishopric, or other high preferment, would tempt a man, after he has taken his ordinary degree—I speak in presence of those who, though my juniors, are nevertheless entitled to express an opinion upon such a point—to prosecute his study of the classics? What brings young statesmen into the arena of political strife, save the desire and expectation of office? Let Canning, Brougham, and Macaulay suffice for examples. Turn to literature—Would Scott or Byron have written so much as they did save for the incentive of money; their fame being simply the fact which secured the large circulation of their works? Sir, in order to secure appreciation, all talent must have its price; and further, as an accredited minister of the Gospel, and a dignitary of the Anglican Church”—here the Doctor assumed a most solemn tone, and absolutely shed tears—“it is my duty to proclaim that he who wraps his talent within a napkin,

and will not lay it out at usury, must expect a terrible condemnation."

I regret to say that this very perspicuous, and, I shall add, business-like oration, did not convince Carlton, who burst into a perfect tornado of wrath, when, next day, the Doctor offered him fifty guineas for his sketch; and I had the utmost difficulty in restoring even partial tranquillity.

At length letters arrived from England; and Dr Dovering intimated that, as the state of Alfred's arm was now such as to admit of his travelling, they were about to take their leave of us and to return homewards.

"I am charged, moreover," he said, "to deliver you this letter, from the noble father of my pupil, the Earl of Windermere, whose exalted position and unblemished character are too widely known to require any private eulogium. You may be sure, Mr Sinclair, that I did not fail to communicate to his lordship in detail the circumstances connected with our meeting, nor to expatiate upon the signal gallantry you exhibited in effecting the rescue of his son."

As the Doctor made this communication with more delicacy than was his wont, I thanked him for the pains which he had taken, and proceeded to open Lord Windermere's letter, which was as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—Dr Dovering has informed me of the inappreciable service you have rendered to me and my

family by rescuing, at imminent peril to yourself, my beloved child Alfred from almost certain destruction. To you, under God, we owe his preservation ; and when I think of the terrible affliction which would have befallen myself and his mother had we been bereft of our dearest boy, I can hardly find words wherewith to express my thanks.

“ Deeds, however, and not words, must requite such an obligation. Dr Dovering states that he has not been able to ascertain what are your prospects or plans for the future ; and therefore I am somewhat at a loss to know how I can prove my gratitude without offending your feelings. I venture to entreat that you will frankly tell me how I can forward your views, and thus give me an opportunity, not of paying my debt—for that I never can do—but of acknowledging how much I owe you.

“ If you should feel any reluctance in writing to me on such a subject, pray let me know when you arrive in London. Lady Windermere desires me to say that she will not be happy until she is able personally to thank the rescuer of her son.

“ I shall not say more at present ; but, trusting that you will not refuse this my earnest request, I subscribe myself your sincere friend,

“ WINDERMERE.”

“ A very proper letter,” said Carlton, to whom I showed the above. “ I like his way of expressing himself, and you may be certain he is thoroughly in earnest.

Lord Windermere is well spoken of, both as a politician and a landlord. He is a Tory of the old school, and though he does not often speak in the House of Lords, he has great influence with the Ministry. I congratulate you, Sinclair, on having made so influential a friend."

"But really, Carlton, I have done nothing to deserve all this praise and thanksgiving. Had it not been for Lion, I could not have helped young Spencer."

"As well might a cavalry officer say, that but for his horse he could not have charged a square of infantry! The prowess of honest Lion must not interfere with your deserts. Besides, you had the merit of the idea of following up the stream through the cave, and you risked your own life by doing so. Hans Krauskopf, who knows the glacier well, says he would not have penetrated so far as you did for a hat full of dollars; and Hans is by no means obtuse as to the value of coined money."

"Then what would you advise me to do?"

"Write at once to Lord Windermere that you will wait upon him as soon as you arrive in London. Such matters are much better discussed *vivá voce* than by letters. When you do see him, you will of course frankly tell him how you are situated, and you may rely upon it he will find you employment."

"Well—I do not object to employment; but I hate to be under obligations to any man."

"So far as I can see, the obligation is on the other side. Sinclair, you have given me the right to speak

to you as a friend, and I shall do so unreservedly. You are haunted by a certain pride of independence, which is all very well in its way, but which you must beware of, lest it should carry you to preposterous extremes. In this world every man must avail himself of the aid of others. You have earned the right to expect assistance from Lord Windermere, and he has frankly offered it. Why should you reject it?"

"I do not reject it, Carlton; but I would much rather owe my elevation, if I am to rise at all, to my own exertions than to the aid of others. I must, however, necessarily answer this letter; and I shall of course promise to wait upon his lordship in London, though I may not do so immediately after my arrival there."

"As to that you must please yourself. Only when fortune has given you such a chance, beware of letting it slip through your fingers."

On the following day Dr Dovering and his charge departed; the latter entreating both Carlton and myself to lose no time in coming to see them in London, and assuring us emphatically of the pleasure which his mother would derive from that visit.

The season was now far advanced, and we too began to think of returning to England. The evenings began to draw in, the foliage had assumed a russet hue, the air became perceptibly colder, and fresh snow had fallen on the mountains. So we took our last walks, revisited our favourite haunts in the neighbourhood, among which be sure the glacier was not forgotten;

and having made our preparations, set out for Mannheim, at which city we proposed to embark in the steamer down the Rhine. Parting with our host and hostess was rather a painful business, for Babili was an affectionate creature, and Hans himself was not unmoved ; but we got over it as quick as possible, and were soon driving, as fast as the habits of the *lohnkutscher* would allow, through the beautiful territory of Baden.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STEAMER ON THE RHINE.

NOWHERE will you find so great a diversity of character, so singular an agglomeration of nationalities, as on board a Rhenish steamer. There is the reserved and somewhat supercilious Briton, returning with wife and family from their summer excursion, avoiding as much as possible intercourse with strangers, and contrasting unfavourably foreign luxuries with his own domestic comforts. There is the gay, lively, rattling Parisian, who would fain enter into a flirtation with the fair-haired English "mees,"^{ms} but is deterred by the menacing attitude of her mamma, who regards him as a maternal hen would regard a hawk swooping in the neighbourhood of her chickens. There swaggers the ferocious *militaire* with his heavy mustache and capacious red breeches—a *sous officier*, evidently risen from the ranks, who, with a supreme contempt for the rest of the company in so far as they belong not to the "grande nation," devotes himself to puffing execrable tobacco from a short black pipe, and the con-

sumption of innumerable *petits verres*. There is the sleek, full-faced, close-shaven Hollander, with capacious paunch and twinkling eye, indicative of shrewdness and sagacity—a man whom it would be difficult to overreach. There is the prying boastful American, who makes it his business to inquire into that of every one else, utterly devoid of bashfulness, and perfectly insensible to rebuff. There is the Jew from the Minories, or from Frankfort, a shabby, dingy creature, though, for aught you know, he may be as rich as Croesus or Rothschild. It is the pleasure of the Hebrew to appear thus ill-accounted in his wanderings, for that helps to disguise the nature of his transactions. He is, you may be certain, on a journey of profit, not of pleasure—possibly for the purchase of diamonds, or possibly for the collection of rags—anyhow, he is an apt representation of the Hivites, who imposed upon Joshua by representing that their garments and their shoes had become old by reason of the very long journey. There is the bleary-eyed spectacled German professor, with his long cherry-stalked pipe, maundering metaphysics to an admiring group of long-haired students in blouses and boots, whose devotion to learning, let us hope, is greater than their attention to cleanliness. There, also, you may occasionally see some mediatised potentate—Duke, Count, or Baron—whose immediate ancestors were sovereigns of a district much smaller in dimensions and revenue than is owned by his Grace of Buccleuch in several shires of Scotland. And there you are certain to meet with a

host of inspired artists and poets, less intoxicated with the execrable Moselle which is vended on board the steamer, than with the glorious scenery and romantic associations of that noblest of rivers, the Rhine.

It was a cold morning when we went on board the steamer at Mannheim, and I apprehend that all the passengers felt dissatisfied at the early hour announced for starting. However, there was no help for it. The inexorable bell was rung ; and down we had to trundle to the jetty, making such composition as we could for overcharge at the hotel. Of course, England had the worst of it, as is commonly the case in all matters of petty traffic ! But when we did get on board, and saw that our whole luggage had been delivered, and had paid the porters, than whom no more villanous extortioners ever breathed the breath of life ; and had, moreover, satisfactorily established, to the conviction of certain personages in uniform, that we were not political refugees or delinquents, we had to undergo another scrutiny. A tall loose-jointed man, the hue of whose complexion suggested the idea that he had but recently recovered from an attack of the jaundice, coolly walked up to the luggage, and began to examine the labels.

“ I say, Mister,” said he, addressing me with that nasal twang which is peculiar to that class of the free and enlightened citizens of the United States, who, to the infinite annoyance of their more polished countrymen, bring social discredit on America—“ I say, Mister ; I guess now that ’ere portmanteau is your’n ? ”

I frankly admitted my proprietorship.

“So your name’s Sinclair, is it? I reckon you’ll be from Scotland.”

I nodded an affirmative.

“Smart people the Scotch, I know that. They can look about them a little. And where did you hail from last?”

“Switzerland.”

“Been on pleasuring, I’ve a notion?”

“Really, sir,” said I, “you are very kind to take such an interest in my affairs. I cannot understand how a knowledge of my personal history or movements can be advantageous to an utter stranger.”

“Wall, now; you’re a rael Britisher, that’s a fact,” said the Yankee. “How’s a man to find out anything without asking? and what’s the use of keeping everything to yourself like a hiccory nut that’s over-hard for cracking? I allow now, if I had asked you to loan me a handful of dollars, you might have looked as glum as a beaver in a trap; but there’s a tarnation difference between that and a civil question on the road.”

“Well, sir,” said I with a smile, for there was no use being angry with the man, “I shall concede that on principle you are right; and if you do not object to reciprocity, and will favour me with your confidences in return, I shall not object to answer any reasonable question.”

“Now, Squire Sinclair, sir, that’s what I call rational,” said the Yankee, lighting a cigar, “and I won’t object to tell you that my name is Jefferson J. Ewins,

Connecticut, that I do a smart business in Hartford, and that I have been down in Switzerland to look after calicoes. Have you any notion of such fixings?"

"No, indeed," I replied. "I am profoundly ignorant on the subject of calicoes."

"Wall, now; that rubs me out. Not one in two of you Britishers knows anything about calico; and yet, but for our cotton, it would have been gone goose with the old onmaternal country! Mercy sakes alive!—I guess that, without Virginny, Manchester by this time would have been knocked into a cocked hat, and have got a hyst that it wouldn't have sniggered at. But mayhap you do a streak in the hard line—I allow your razors are pretty."

"You are quite mistaken, Mr Ewins. And, to be plain with you, I shall make no further revelations as to my calling or profession, leaving that for your ingenuity to discover; but I shall answer any questions you may be pleased to put upon other topics."

"Now I guess you're getting stuffy, Squire! You needn't give me a socdolager that way; for if I've waked up the wrong passenger, I didn't mean it, and it's no use to fly off the handle. Darn it—what a time they are in getting breakfast! The morning's raw—what say you to step down and liquor?"

Declining the proposed conviviality, I moved to another part of the steamer, leaving behind me inadvertently a German edition of an English novel (it was Sir E. B. Lytton's *Pilgrims of the Rhine*), the pages

of which were only partially cut open. I discovered afterwards that my Transatlantic acquaintance had pounced upon it, and, in his literary zeal, had used his finger as a paper-cutter, thereby mutilating the volume. Carlton, who had rested ill during the previous night, had gone down to the cabin to slumber, if possible, for an hour ; and I, in order to avoid the attacks of two *burschen*, who seemed anxious to claim fraternity, entered into conversation with a middle-aged English gentleman, of highly respectable appearance and agreeable manners, who seemed very glad to embrace the opportunity of discoursing in his own language, and who certainly was a marked contrast to my recent acquaintance the Yankee.

I have forgotten now the point from which we started. Most probably it was an allusion to the weather, or to the scenery, or something of a similar kind, which gradually expanded itself into a discussion far more wide and extended, embracing Continental education, forms of government, the police system, consular establishments, and many other cognate subjects. I was, I shall fairly confess, quite fascinated by the demeanour of the man. Evidently a person of some rank or place in the scale of social consideration, he was not in the least degree supercilious ; but, acknowledging the slightness of his acquaintance with foreign matters, he requested information, and listened to it in a way that could not fail to be highly gratifying to a man so much his junior. He even asked per-

mission to take notes, and did so ; and after breakfast, he requested that I would favour him by continuing the conversation.

Carlton, having benefited by his slumber, tried more than once to get me away ; but I stuck to my new acquaintance. People say that a Scot is not easily humbugged—I fear it is otherwise. You can humbug him always, if, mingled with an encomium on his own individual sagacity, you introduce a compliment to the national shrewdness which marks the race. I, at any rate, was humbugged, for I was actually foolish enough to confide to this entire stranger more of my personal history and aspirations than prudence would have warranted me in disclosing. Men oftentimes, under the influence of vinous excitement, make similar revelations over-night, and next morning are heartily ashamed and sorry for having done so ; but here was I, as sober as an anchorite, and considering myself all the while a very prudent personage, laying bare my inmost thoughts to a man who, for anything I knew to the contrary, might be a swindler or a Jesuit in disguise. My only excuse is the artful way in which he wormed himself into my confidence, and the deep interest which he professed to feel in my narrative. After I had told him that I intended to remain for some time in London, and that my prospects were uncertain, he said, after a brief pause—

“ In so far as I can judge, or as my experience of the world suggests, your career is likely to be a distinguished one. You have in your favour youth, ability,

industry, large information, and high principle, and when these are combined they must command success. We have need of such men as you for the public service. Attached as I am to the great Conservative party, and having held more than once offices of considerable trust and responsibility, I have often lamented that the Ministry of the day did not take more pains to search for and encourage rising talent. Your genius, I can perceive already, is eminently of a practical kind. I cannot doubt that you will shine as a publicist or political writer, and I would advise you to concentrate all your thoughts and energies in that direction. I cannot hope to be of immediate service to you in London, for I must immediately go down to my county; but when Parliament meets, I shall expect to see you, and then, be assured, I shall use my utmost influence in promoting your views. Here is my card. I am called Sir George Smoothly, and have the honour of sitting for the borough of Effingham. I cannot express to you how much gratification I have derived from this agreeable and instructive colloquy, and from your confidence, which, I trust you will admit hereafter, has not been misplaced."

Shortly afterwards I rejoined Carlton, who was filling his sketch-book with heads of Jews, burschen, militaires, and peasant-girls, in the forepart of the vessel.

"So, Master Norman," said he, "you seem to have taken a mighty fancy to that pleasant gentleman yonder. I have not seen you so animated for a long

time. May I venture to ask what were the principal topics of your conversation?"

I felt the colour rise to my cheeks; for, to say the truth, I stood somewhat in awe of Carlton's satirical turn. However, I replied—

"Well;—I don't mind telling you that I have been rather communicative to him about myself; and that I have found him most kind and encouraging."

"Hum!—there is an Italian proverb which prescribes caution in trusting the friend of an hour. Do you know who or what he is?"

"Here is his card."

"Sir George Smoothly? That's so far well. He is an M.P., and on the right side, though they do say he is but a slippery fellow. And he has offered to assist you, eh?"

"With every appearance of cordiality and interest."

"Did you tell him anything about your connection, real or presumed, with Lord Windermere?"

"Not a word. That would have been a violation of confidence, as well as a gross act of egotism."

"I am glad to hear you say so. But, Norman, take my advice, and keep yourself to yourself as much as you can, except with assured friends. There are many men who walk in masks, and the prettiest mask of all is that of philanthropy, and the desire of doing good. You know, of course, that glorious parable of old John Bunyan, the *Pilgrim's Progress*? It is a valuable study, not only for Christian development, but for

human character. Take care that you have not fallen in with a Mr Worldly Wiseman."

"Have you talked with the Yankee?"

"A first-rate fellow! He has nearly killed me with some of his stories. The best of the joke is, that, not knowing our intimacy, he took you off to the life as an impenetrable Caledonian."

"The devil he did!"

"Of course—and I wish you had kept up the character. But what American impudence could not achieve, I suspect English plausibility has accomplished. Never mind, Norman! there's no harm done as yet. Let us cultivate our Jonathan's acquaintance, and certainly we shall extract some fun."

Carlton was right. We had great fun out of Mr Ewins, who related to us various dodges, commercial and civil, which, in England, would certainly have been brought under the notice of the Old Bailey Court, but, in America, seemed to be considered as the mere eccentricities of genius. He intended, he said, before recrossing the Atlantic, to have a peep at the Britishers with the view of compiling a volume on their national peculiarities, which he guessed "would be nip and tuck to the tarnal old woman," for so he irreverently denominated Mrs Trollope. He had met—so he told us—a good many of them on the Continent, but had been, for the most part, highly dissatisfied with their demeanour, which appeared to him to be outrageously bumptious, and to contrast unfavourably with the ease,

grace, and affability of the American code of manners. Nevertheless he was willing to defer pronouncing final judgment until he had studied their character at home ; and he doubted not that he would be able to make his way at once, without any difficulty, into the most aristocratic circles of English society.

“ It stands to reason,” said he, “ that your top-sawyers should wish to be heard about among the free and independent citizens of the States ; for they know that we have shot already a long chalk ahead of the old country, and there’s a sort of chaps about Manchester that won’t rest till they’ve whittled down your rotten old constitution to the size and shape of ours. I can tell you it’s a grand thing for one of your Dukes to get spoken about on the other side of the Atlantic ; and I guess that, with all their tarnation pride, they’d be too glad to do the civil thing to any one of us who has gumption to show them up if need be. I’ve known a chap that had the run of all the best houses in London, jest because it was known that he could be plaguy troublesome with the pen. Countesses couldn’t be too fond of him, that’s a fact ; and he got into the drawing-rooms as easily as a pole-cat gets into a hen-roost. That’s what I mean to do ; and I guess that if your ministers don’t invite me to dine with them in the Cabinet, they’ll find their ears as hot as though they had slept with red pepper poultices in their night-caps !”

Such and such-like were the aspirations in which

Mr Ewins indulged ; and so, having by this time passed through the grand scenery of the Upper Rhine, and entered into the monotonous reaches of Holland, we wiled away the hours with jest and banter, until we arrived at Rotterdam, where we went on board of the London steamer.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the urgent entreaties of Carlton, I persisted in declining to take up my residence under his roof. In coming to that determination I was influenced by two reasons. In the first place, I anticipated that the approaching winter would be one of hard work and study ; things which cannot be undertaken and steadily carried through, unless a man is absolutely master of his own time and motions. However zealous or determined you may be in the prosecution of a task—however religiously you may refrain from the ordinary seductions of society—you are liable to the most grievous interruptions, and will fritter away much valuable time, if you do not possess the means of insuring at will the most perfect and unbroken seclusion. Now, seclusion is a thing not to be had, when two young men with similar tastes, and with a strong mutual liking, reside together. The day begins with breakfast, some pleasant talk, the perusal of the paper, and a cigar, during which pastimes an

hour or two insensibly glide away ; and then, if the weather be fine, the idler or more unoccupied of the twain proposes a stroll, or a visit to some object of interest, which the other has rarely strength of mind to resist. For oftentimes, and in most moods, all kind of work is abhorrent to us ; and we are too glad to embrace even the flimsiest excuse for escaping from what may be a positive duty. But, supposing that this temptation is overcome, and that the remainder of the forenoon is dedicated to work, there must be a certain space allowed for exercise ; after which comes dinner, either at home or abroad. A certain genial lassitude is felt, which, combined with the delusive thought that we have already done a good day's work, indisposes us from further labour ; and the result is that we find ourselves in the theatre, or the opera, or some other place of popular entertainment. Rely upon it, young men, if you have occasion to work hard, which means to practise self-denial, you will do well to eschew companionship under the same roof. Your best friend may prove your worst enemy—at least, looking back through the vista of years, I recall the image of more than one good fellow, to whom I was sincerely attached, but of whom I must nevertheless say that it would have been better had our acquaintance been less. In the second place, I was, as Carlton truly enough observed, somewhat independent in my views. That is a national characteristic which people may commend or not, according to their peculiar ideas. I am aware that many Englishmen have or had the idea

that what they call "boeing" and seraping is an attribute of the Scot, and they quote the dramatic character of Sir Archy M'Sycophant as an example. They are egregiously mistaken. The Scot, if he is a gentleman, is as proud as a Spaniard, and sometimes carries pride even to a ridiculous degree. Within the range of my own recollection, there has, in this respect, been a considerable improvement, for I remember the time when the merest dullard who could show charters for a few hereditary acres, dated five or six centuries back, gave himself the most insufferable airs, and in his ape-like self-sufficiency sneered at the British Peerage as if it were a convention of parvenues; but I would fain hope that all such preposterous extravagance has disappeared, or only remains to be laughed at. But the proper pride of the gentleman—that which keeps him free from subserviency, from doing anything that can derogate from ancient honour, from staining the purity of his shield—will, I trust, continue to be observed so long as Scotland adheres to her ancient and honourable traditions. I cannot assert that I was entirely without ambition, for the total absence of ambition is as fatal to a man as its presence in unrestrained excess; but I was resolved, so far as possible, to maintain my own independence while entering on a new career.

I accordingly took lodgings in a dull street in Westminster, which terminated in a railing on the bank of the river. It was certainly about as undesirable a locality as I could have found in all London, but I chose it because it was not a thoroughfare, being ac-

cessible only by a flight of steps which precluded the entrance of cart or carriage. Here, I thought, I shall be able at least to secure absolute quiet. Never was there such a delusion! From the first glimmering of early dawn the street was vocal with the cries of hawkers of every kind, who seemed to drive a smart trade in milk, vegetables, pies, and other small comestibles; and no sooner was the business of the ambulatory market over, than we had an influx of the children of Israel, whose delight is in cast raiment; of Bavarian broom-girls, saucy sluts as ever peered into a window on the ground-floor; of unannexed Savoyards, with hurdy-gurdies, barrel-organs, monkeys, and white mice; of fictitious sailors with wooden legs, bawling the ballad of the Arethusa; of unemployed operatives, who marched in gangs, howling a dismal litany; and of a most unfacetious Punch, who thrice a-week molested that street with his squeak of preternatural shrillness. It was no use attempting to buy them off with loose coins. The Cobre copper-mine itself would have been exhausted by the rapacity of so many vagabonds, who, I am convinced, marked those houses in which weak-minded donors resided, and made them the especial object of their visits. The only way to mitigate the nuisance, was to draw down the blind, and to put a ticket in the window announcing vacant apartments; but I soon discovered the fallacy of that expedient, which involved the necessity of having candles lighted at noonday, so I even tried to

endure this succession of plagues with the calm obstinacy of an Egyptian.

Decidedly mine was an uncomfortable lodging. Besides the parlour to the front, which was my breakfast and writing room, I had a back bedroom looking into a paved court, which latter was the favourite resort of the feline tribe ; for there Tom and Tabby did most amorously consort at nightfall, and rob Morpheus of his dues by dint of their confounded caterwauling. Nor can I say much in favour of the internal accommodation. I am not of Sybaritic tendencies, and might in the course of time have become accustomed to the hardness of the bed ; but my flesh suffered grievously from the lumps of unpicked oakum which appeared to constitute a large portion of the stuffing of the mattress. Upon what food my landlady, Mrs Lewson, and the one gawky girl, evidently taken from the workhouse, who was her sole domestic, subsisted, I never exactly ascertained ; but, judging from the odours which, at certain hours, pervaded the passage, I am inclined to think that onions formed a large ingredient in their meals. I had no faith in Mrs Lewson's talents for cookery, and indeed never requested her to favour me with any specimens of her skill, except for breakfast, and even then I was forced to content myself with eggs and anchovies, having been greatly scared, on the morning after I took possession of the rooms, by the appearance of some most equivocal sausages, which, if subjected to analysis, would, I fear, have been summarily condemned. Howbeit, as Mrs Lewson, in her own

way, was very civil, and not more of an extortioner than was natural to her calling—while slipshod Sally, though awkward and untidy, was a willing drudge, and extremely grateful for an occasional shilling—I made up my mind to tarry where I was; at all events, for the winter months, which were now rapidly approaching.

I had no want of occupation of a fair remunerative kind; for, as already explained, I had established a literary connection; and, being always punctual to my engagements, my pen was in considerable request. And here I cannot help observing with gratitude and delight, that even anonymous authorship in our day, if deliberately adopted and steadily persevered in by men of competent ability and education, is certain to receive a reward—not large, certainly, nor any way to be compared with the emoluments which are to be derived from the steady adherence to a recognised profession—but much more liberal than high genius could have commanded in the days of Savage and Johnson. I am quite aware that literature, regarded as the sole means of obtaining a livelihood, is the most precarious of pursuits; and that, even now, adventurers of no inconsiderable talent, who have forced their way into the literary field, have been compelled to eat the bread of misery, and have moistened it with their tears. But I think, if we come to consider such cases individually, we shall find that one of two things was wanting—Either that the candidate for recognition in the republic of letters (which, in plain terms, means the good-will of

the publishers) had been too ambitious in his early attempts, and, overlooking the fact that very few authors have attained celebrity or won the ear of the public without undergoing the probation of a long apprenticeship, had tried to take heaven by storm, and, like Phaeton, to step at once into the chariot and drive the horses of the sun. Or, which is the more common case, that, after a certain amount of success, the animal spirits which most literary men possess, and which, under proper control, are to them no inconsiderable advantage—or otherwise their vanity and proneness to adulation—hurry them into excesses and disorderly habits, such as brought Robert Greene and Christopher Marlowe to their early and dishonourable graves. The greater the gift, the more numerous and powerful are the temptations that beset us. O that men would but consider that the talents which they are enabled to exhibit, and which are oftentimes so much admired by the unthinking multitude, who, after a peculiar fashion, regard them as intellectual idols, are not of their own creation, but were vouchsafed to them by the Almighty; and that, if abused or perverted, those talents will be a curse to them on earth, and condemnation in the judgment to come!

Of course I did not occupy myself entirely with quill-driving and mental work, but sought in a moderate way such recreation as London, during the gloomy months of November and December, could afford. I saw a good deal of Carlton, passing many pleasant evenings at his house, which was the resort of some

artists of eminence and literary men, whose acquaintance I was happy to make. I did not fail to call upon Lord Windermere ; but learned that his lordship and family were at their country seat, and were not expected in town until the meeting of Parliament in spring. Oddly enough, I felt this as a kind of relief, for I rather dreaded the preliminary interview. Most people know how extremely disagreeable it is to make a set speech of acknowledgment for a favour bestowed—it is, I am sure, quite the same when you are to be the recipient of the thanks. Between friends, a squeeze of the hand or a glance of the eye suffices. You know magnetically what is meant, and there is no occasion for further palaver. But with strangers you must go through or endure a set form of words, which, to my mind at least, is absolutely detestable, resembling the buttering style of discourse adopted at the presentation of testimonials—occasions which, I am sorry to say (never having myself received any valuable testimonial), are, at the present time, far too numerous.

I had maintained but little communication with my friends in Scotland ; indeed, save for the scanty intelligence conveyed in the occasional letters of Ned Mather, whose powers of composition were limited, I should have heard nothing of the early friends of my youth. One day, however, when taking my solitary dinner at the coffeehouse which I usually frequented, I discovered an old acquaintance. Two men, whose showy but rather tigerish apparel indicated that they were deep in some tailor's books, entered the room with that

assumed swagger which no person of real breeding assumes ; and calling for the bill of fare, proceeded to criticise its contents aloud. The elder of the two, who was seated at a table directly opposite to mine, was a strong-built, flash-looking fellow of some five-and-thirty, elaborately got up as a representative of that class of society which arrogates to itself the exclusive term of the sporting world. He wore a brilliant blue scarf, ornamented with an immense fox-head pin, and a natty green cut-away coat with metal buttons, which partly covered, but did not conceal, a waistcoat of colossal stripes. His hair was cut short like that of a groom or prize-fighter, but he had given the utmost latitude to his whiskers, which flourished in unrestrained luxuriance. His features were somewhat Jewish in their cast, representing cunning and rapacity, whilst an immense under-jaw betokened great tenacity of purpose. Altogether he was just the kind of man whom you naturally would expect to encounter in the betting ring, but with whom it would be exceeding wise if you refrained from entering into any transaction.

This worthy took the lion's share of the conversation and the wine, and was evidently regarded by his companion, whose back was towards me, as a fellow of infinite fancy and unbounded humour. It was impossible to avoid hearing their discourse, which, indeed, was obviously intended for the astonishment and delectation of the other occupants of the tables ; but it was not of the most edifying kind, consisting princi-

pally of anecdotes of the private lives and walk of actresses and opera-dancers, with several of whom the knight of the blue scarf appeared to be upon terms of easy intimacy. Sentences like the following were poured forth in abundance :—

“ By Jove, sir, Fanny is a devilish fine girl, I assure you. Clean made, tight little thing ; neat in the pattern, and steps out like a thorough-bred filly. You can't help liking a girl that has go in her ; and as for fun, she's up to all manner of ginger. Did you never hear how she got an emerald bracelet out of Lord Henry Faddle. Gad ! it was the cleverest thing ever done ; and the best of the joke was that Lord Henry had scarce been married a fortnight ! Tell you what—I'll introduce you ; yes, by Jove, I will ! Fanny's just the sort of girl to suit you.”

“ Young man !” said an elderly stranger seated at a neighbouring table, who had already manifested some annoyance at the rude tone of the discourse—“ Young man ! if thou art indeed as loose-living a person as thou representest thyself to be, I would advise thee not to proclaim it abroad, seeing that thou wilt receive no credit for the same, but rather incur contempt and disgust on account of thine ill-mannered conversation.”

“ Eh—what ! By Jove, here's a go !” replied he of the fox-head, bristling up like a Bobadil ; “ who the devil spoke to you, sir ? What right have you to address yourself to a gentleman ? By Jingo, I've a great mind to pull your nose, you sanctimonious old humbug !”

“Friend,” retorted the Quaker, for such his speech denoted him to be, “if thou art indeed, as thou sayest, a gentleman, which, trust me, I do not believe, thou wouldst not appeal so frequently as thou dost to the father of lies. And as for pulling my nose, thou hast neither the power to do it nor the temerity to attempt it.”

So saying, the Quaker arose, displaying a figure which for burliness might have stood comparison with that of Tom Cribb, or any other professor of the fistic science, while a stout crabtree cudgel quivered in his grasp.

I confess that I heartily enjoyed the scene, and almost wished that the representative of the sporting public would be rash enough to carry his threat into execution, in which case he would certainly have received a most righteous and salutary drubbing. But, as is generally the way with such Hectors, he showed the white feather, and, muttering something about not wishing to make a row, he turned to his companion, and recommenced his discourse, though in a much lower tone than before. I had now an opportunity of observing the other, whose voice had struck me as familiar, and, to my extreme surprise, I recognised my old office comrade, James Littlewoo, whom I had left upon the threshold, as I supposed, of professional life in Edinburgh.

James had always been regarded by us as a soft lad, rather weak than wicked—“Pap-headed,” as Mr Shearaway used to say of him; “his brains are just perfect

batter"—but I never had seen any great harm in him, nor, as a youth, was he viciously addicted. I therefore felt quite sorry to find him on such intimate terms with a scamp of the worst description, and evidently on the road towards folly, vice, and ruin. I determined, for his father's sake, as well as from the recollection of old times, to ascertain how far he was involved, but that, of course, necessitated a further and private interview.

Accordingly, before leaving the room, I went towards him, and, notwithstanding an insolent stare from his companion, which I felt strongly inclined to resent, made myself known. Littlewoo, to do him justice, seemed really glad to see me, though he hesitated and blushed as he introduced me to "his friend Mr Speedwell," who thereupon thought fit to abate somewhat of his dignity, and graciously assured me that he "was devilish glad to make the acquaintance of any friend of his friend Mr Littlewoo." As I could not, without being rude, depart instantly, I sat down at their table for a few minutes, for the purpose of procuring Littlewoo's address, which having obtained, I took my hat, and was about to leave, when Mr Speedwell broke in.

"So you've been lately on the Continent, sir? Ah—that's the place for fun! No slow-coachiness there, or confounded peelers of policemen to interfere with your amusement! Been at Wiesbaden and Homburg? *Rouge-et-noir* from morning to night, with pretty women squeezing in to the tables, and picking up the

gold like dickey-birds pecking at the flies! Know Charley Topham? He was a rare good un was Charley! By Jingo, sir, he broke the bank two nights running, and pocketed a cool ten thousand—that's what I call luck and fast living!"

I contented myself by simply denying all knowledge of either watering-place, and by stating that I had not the good fortune to be acquainted with the accomplished Charles.

"Ah! Perhaps you're quite right not to boast of such doings here," replied Mr Speedwell. "Devilish queer people one meets in these coffee-houses. Was very nearly pulling the nose of an old snob of a Quaker in this very room, not ten minutes ago, for impertinence—but, hang it! after all, it would have been a shame to have served out Obadiah. Tell you what—you and Littlewoo haven't met for a long time, it would appear. The night is young yet. Let us all go together to the Shades, and prime ourselves with a bottle or so of claret, or some hot brandy-and-water; and then I'll show you a little of real life in London. I know a quiet house in Jermyn Street—door with a wicket in it, you understand?—none but swells go there; and we can have a shy at hazard. What's the odds so long as we are happy? Young fellows like us must do something to keep the blood in circulation in this confounded muggy weather. And then we'll top off at the Finish!"

I not only gave a decided negative to this proposal, but attempted to rescue Littlewoo from the clutches of

the destroyer, by asking him to walk home with me. But he was too far gone already. The fascinating picture, limned by the artistic hand of Mr Speedwell, had for him an irresistible attraction ; and I was compelled, though most unwillingly, to leave him in the custody of his Mephistopheles.

Next morning I proceeded to Littlewoo's rooms as indicated by his card ; but as he had told me that he should remain at home all the forenoon, I did not make my visit an early one. This was so far fortunate, for I found him just risen and seated at breakfast, to which meal, with the exception of the contents of the teapot, he did marvellous little justice. Now that I had leisure to observe the poor fellow, I saw that he was greatly altered. From a fine, healthy, rosy-faced lad, he had decayed into a thin, ghastly young man, with an ominous red spot upon his cheek, and that peculiar discoloration under the eyes which is the never-failing mark of long-continued dissipation. His nerves too were evidently affected, for his hand shook as he raised the cup to his lips. However, he appeared lively enough ; and, without entering into any details regarding his adventures of the previous night—as to which I did not think myself entitled to inquire—he began to talk of old friends, and was especially communicative as to his own personal history.

It was the old story over again. It appeared that Jamie Littlewoo, from the first hour that he was seated at a desk, loathed his occupation, and inwardly determined that no power, human or divine, should make

him a practitioner of the law. His own penchant was for the army, an inclination which his father sternly refused to gratify, alleging that the profession of a soldier was a damnable one, inasmuch as it must necessarily lead, as an ancient jurist had well remarked, to *homicidium planum per plures commissum*, which, if it could not be altogether regarded in the light of *homicidium culposum*, or murder, did certainly imply the lesser crime of *chaudmella*, or casual slaughter; "which," said Mr Littlewoo, "doth not, in the opinion of many, imply the assoilziement of the slayer, but doth simply entitle him to the privilege and advantage of refuge in the Girth, which privilege of sanctuary in matters criminal hath been abolished since the time of the Reformation."

But this learned exposition did not carry conviction to the heart of the son, who still hankered for the glories of the scarlet uniform, and showed his tendencies by cultivating the acquaintance of the officers of every regiment that was stationed either at Edinburgh Castle or at Piershill. In this he was aided and abetted by his sisters, who liked to have military partners at the assemblies, and by his mamma, who considered them desirable acquisitions for her private dancing-parties; and Hicks of the Heavies, and Spoonbill of the Light Bobs, could not do less in acknowledgment for such courtesies than invite Jamie Littlewoo to the mess. In the days of which I speak, I regret to say that a very great deal of liquor was consumed on those festive occasions when the gallant de-

fenders of their country admitted guests to their table. I believe that in this respect a sensible improvement has now taken place, and that the "nights at mess" are not so killing as they used to be; but then the pace was fast and furious—far too much so for poor Littlewoo, who was driven to sore shifts to preserve even a decent appearance in the office.

"I always told the Governor," said he, "that it would not do. I did hate the law most cordially, Sinclair—didn't you?—and I could not stand the way in which the good fellows at the Castle used to talk about attorneys. Besides, I had no head for it. Old Shearaway kept perpetually bothering me to write out deeds and nonsense of that kind when I was thinking of quite other things; and whenever I dined at home and the table-cloth was off, the Governor began to prose about cases, and to quote Morison, and Shaw, and Dunlop, and Connell upon Teinds, till I wished the whole gang of them at the bottom of the Red Sea. You'll allow it was very aggravating. Well, Norman, I had no sooner got through my apprenticeship than my father wanted me to pass W.S. No, no! Now or never, I thought, I must make a stand; so I told him flatly I would not. He was a good deal vexed at this, I think; for he said I was throwing away a splendid opportunity, and sacrificing a first-rate business; but I stuck to my point like a limpet, and then he told me that he would not oppose my qualifying myself for the bar. Now the bar is all very well in its own way, and there are no doubt some capital chaps in the Parliament House, no end of

fun at the stoves, and roaring dinners at the Flesh-market ; but it must be a tiresome thing sweeping the boards with a black gown if you have no practice, as was likely to be my case ; and if a large practice comes, you are worked like a horse in a mill, which does not answer my constitution. Besides, one is obliged to be up at the House every morning by nine o'clock, summer or winter, and that does not agree with dining out ; so I told the Governor that the bar would not suit me. He flew into an awful passion, and sulked for three weeks, during which time I took care to be as little at home as possible. At last I believe he took council with old Shearaway, who is not a bad sort of fellow at bottom—you were always a great favourite of his, Norman—and Shearaway told him at once that he did not think I would do for the bar, but suggested that he should use his influence to get me into one of the public offices, as I was then too old for joining the army. I made no objection, for I understood that the government work was light, and the attendance easy ; and I should have liked well enough to have got into the Foreign Department. But it seems there is no choice in those things. One must take whatever comes first ; so they planted me in the Board of Trade, where we are like to be smothered to death by the pressure of these confounded railways. It is lucky that this happens to be a holiday, else I could not have seen you."

"And how do you like the work, Littlewoo?"

"I like it as well as I can like any kind of work

whatever. It is a nuisance at the best, but I would not complain, if they did not ask us to come at extra hours. However, I believe I shall get a step soon, and the Governor gives me an allowance. And I must say that I like London far better than Edinburgh. Nothing like being near the centre. And then I know a lot of first-rate fellows."

"Do you mean such gentlemen as your friend Mr Speedwell?" said I.

Littlewoo blushed to the eyes.

"I saw well enough that you did not like him, Sinclair; and I admit that he is rather too plain-spoken. But he is a real friendly fellow. I don't know any man whom I can more readily apply to when I happen to be hard up. And then he has a first-rate connection—knows all the nobs—d'Orgeat and the rest of the top-sawyers."

"Hem!—I should be disposed to doubt the intimacy of your friend with the Count."

"O, it's a fact, I assure you. I had it from himself."

"From the Count?"

"No; from Speedwell. D'Orgeat, you know, is a little dipped, and Speedwell has dealings with Rothschild."

"My dear Littlewoo, I am almost inclined for once to adopt your friend's phraseology, and to say, The devil he has! Why, man, you must have lost your senses! I vow and declare that I never set eyes upon a fellow who had more thoroughly the look of a blackguard!"

"Take care what you say, Sinclair! Mind you, I can hit out straight on occasion. Am I to understand that you mean to insult me?"

"Not at all, my dear James. I wish to save you from present disgrace and ultimate ruin. Now do just listen patiently to me for a minute or two, and then, if you think I am wrong, be as angry as you please."

"The deuce take that cigar!" cried Littlewoo, pitching a newly-lighted weed into the fire, and settling himself on the sofa. "It will not draw. Now I suppose I am in for a sermon. Make it a short one, Norman, since you must needs play the parson. I am not just in the humour for hearing any long-winded rigmarole."

"I don't intend to sermonise; but please recollect that yesterday I could not help overhearing the conversation of your companion, who, among other things, offered you an introduction to an opera-dancer, which you seemed nothing loth to accept; and then proposed to us both to spend the evening in a gambling-house."

"Well, what was the great harm of that? I suppose such things are common enough among young men."

"They may be common enough among people like your friend, Mr Speedwell; but they are not common, I hope, among young men brought up and educated as you have been."

"Well—I grant you that Speedwell is rather a loose sort of fish; but that does not by any means entitle you to call him a blackguard."

"Pardon me! I consider that the man who in his

sober senses makes a parade of his vices before strangers—who attempts to turn over a mistress of whom he is tired to his friend—who seeks to entice younger men than himself to a brothel or a gaming-house—is a blackguard in every sense of the term.”

“Pooh, Sinclair—you really take up these things far too seriously! Joe is a careless fellow; but he is no worse than his neighbours.”

“If so, I would strenuously advise you to keep clear of such a neighbourhood. Come now—I will put a plain question to you. Would you, if you were at home, ask that fellow to your house, and present him to your mother and sisters? You cannot assert that you would do so. Well, then, Littlewoo—let that convince you that he is anything but a respectable comrade.”

“What would you have me do, Sinclair? I won’t deny that there is some truth in what you say, for I feel that Speedwell has been rather carrying me off my legs. But I can’t cut the man at once.”

“No; but you can avoid his society and drop his acquaintance by degrees.”

“That’s not so easy, let me tell you: nor would it be altogether convenient. The fact is, though I don’t like to mention it, that I owe Speedwell money.”

“I am deeply grieved to hear it. O Littlewoo! what could induce you to commit the miserable folly of contracting debt? Do you not see what a terrible power you have given this man over you?”

“Yes—I see that well enough, but I cannot help it

now. By Jove, it makes me sick to think of it! I must have a drop of brandy by way of fortifier. The fact is that I have been very foolish and very extravagant; but don't blow me up, Sinclair—I can't stand it just now!”

“I have no such intention, my dear Littlewoo; the more especially because I see that you are now conscious of your fault. But tell me, do you owe him much?”

“The last bill was for four hundred.”

“That is serious enough, but not absolutely deadly. And pray how much of that did you receive in hard cash?”

“One hundred and eighty. The rest was in pictures and cigars.”

“Pictures?”

“Yes—and very valuable pictures they are too, Speedwell says. That's one of them—a genuine Titian. I believe I could get two hundred guineas for it if I were to offer it to the National Gallery.”

So saying, he pointed to a vile daub, representing Nymphs and Satyrs, upon which no pawbroker in his senses would have advanced sixteen shillings.

“You don't seem to admire it much,” continued Littlewoo. “All I can tell you is that the Duke of Devonshire——”

“My dear James, don't talk nonsense! you have been regularly taken in. I trust your cigars are better than your pictures?”

“Why, I must say I think there has been a mistake

about them. They *do* taste very much as if they were of British manufacture."

"I thought as much. Your friend Mr Speedwell was not likely to do things by halves. Pray, what may be his profession?"

"I believe he is a broker in the City. At all events, he knows a good deal about the Funds."

"Yes; he seems to have a genius that way. Now, Littlewoo—you are evidently in a bad scrape, and you must try to get out of it as quickly as possible."

"But how am I to do that, Norman? I dare not tell my father how the affair stands—it would drive him distracted."

"Surely it is better he should know that you owe four hundred pounds now, than be informed, six months hence, that you are liable for a thousand, which will most certainly be the case if you do not disentangle yourself from the claws of Mr Speedwell."

"Ah! you don't know the Governor so well as I do. I have irritated him quite enough already. And then my mother!—what would she say if she heard of the way in which I have been going on? O dear me! I do believe I am the most miserable fellow on earth!" And here poor Littlewoo burst into a regular fit of crying.

I was profoundly sorry for the lad, who, though a sad fool, exhibited every now and then glimpses of a better feeling. But the case really did seem a desperate one. He was utterly unfit to guide himself, was marked out by nature as a prey for the sharper, and, if

left in London, would certainly, even if relieved from his present difficulties, be ruined soul and body. The first thing, however, to be done, was to get rid of Mr Speedwell; so I advised Littlewoo, since he had such an insuperable objection to communicating directly with his father, to write to Mr Shearaway, who was a very friendly man, acknowledging the extent of his error, and expressing contrition.

"I have very little doubt," I said, "that Mr Shearaway will extricate you from this danger. But, Littlewoo, I would seriously advise you as a friend to consider whether you would not do well to throw up your appointment, quit London, and turn to some other pursuit. You could not be in more peril if you attempted to cross a quicksand than you are exposed to in the streets of this city."

"Let me alone for that!" replied Littlewoo, who began to brighten up, as silly fellows always do when they have eased their minds by confession. Once let me get out of this scrape, and I shall take special care not to fall into another. I'll drop Speedwell, read in the evenings, give up the opera, and never enter the door of a casino or a saloon."

"If you can adhere to those resolutions, Littlewoo, you may yet redeem the past. But remember; the temptations are strong."

"Ah, you don't know what a determined fellow I can be, when I once make up my mind to a thing! I shall be as firm as Ailsa Crag."

"Never boast of your own strength, Littlewoo! The

best and wisest of mankind have no power of themselves to resist temptation. The power must be given from above, and it will not come unless you pray for it."

"Indeed I will, Norman—at least I'll try. I've been a very bad fellow, I know, but I'm not an atheist. And I'll go to church too.—'Tis a long time since I've been there."

"Do so, by all means; but do not regard that as a mere matter of form. Go there to confess your errors, not only because you feel their consequence, but because you are sincerely sorry for having offended in the sight of God. And now good-by! One word more. Deny yourself to Mr Speedwell; keep out of his way; avoid him as you would avoid the pestilence: for if you allow him again to fasten upon you, you are lost beyond the reach of remedy!"

"Never fear! I will keep out of his way. Thank you, thank you, Norman."

I must acknowledge that I had little faith in the endurance of Master James Littlewoo's good resolutions; which it was evident had been adopted, not from inward compunction, but from an aroused sense of the extreme danger in which he stood. However, I could only hope for the best. Leaving his rooms, I bent my steps homeward; but ere I had traversed one street, I observed the mosaic form of Mr Speedwell, on the other side of the way, advancing in the direction from which I came.

"Heaven help the unfortunate fly," said I to myself; "for there glides the remorseless spider!"

CHAPTER XVII.

WILBURY HALL.

NOVEMBER had gone by, as also a considerable portion of December ; and muggy London had assumed its most dismal aspect. I do not wonder that foreigners should affect to pity us on account of our climate, always supposing that they have resided in one of our large towns at the period of the winter solstice. There is no finer or more enjoyable climate than that of England, during the greater portion of the year ; and even the winter is not so rigorous with us as it is in many parts of the Continent. But winter, in country and in town, bears a different aspect. In the first, it is beautiful in its way, bracing, invigorating, and hilarious. In the second it is raw, slushy, foggy, and oppressive. Clean white snow, even when frost prevails, disappears in London and the other large towns immediately after a fall, and resolves itself into a disgusting slimy splash, which penetrates the most cunningly devised boot, and is equivalent to the essence of chilblains. Then the heavy atmosphere drives down the smoke

issuing from a thousand chimneys, so that the very air which you inhale is tainted with sulphurous fumes, and you gasp with extreme discomfort as you grope your way through the fog. And then a thaw ! Reader, did you ever attempt to pass along the Strand during a thaw ? I need not ask ; for if you have once essayed such an exploit, you are not likely ever to forget it. We must, in common charity, forgive the French, who universally and unanimously accuse us of being nationally afflicted by that mysterious disease, the spleen ; which, as I understand it, is not exactly a liver-complaint, but a kind of chronic melancholy, induced by the climatic influences : nay, there is a substratum of truth in their averment ; for, unquestionably, whatever element of moroseness or irritability lurks in our nature, is sure to find its full development under such conditions as those which I have described.

I am not one of those painstaking individuals who preserve notes of the varieties of temperature, or record barometrical variations, and the prevailing currents of the wind. I am but a poor physist, and an indifferent metaphysician ; nevertheless, I have observed that the great majority of stupid quarrels between friends and members of the same family, of savage and slaughterous reviews of unoffending authors, of attacks upon the British constitution, of despairing prophecies of its ruin, and of predictions that the world is to perish within the limited period of six months, as also what are called religious revivals, originate in the months of November, December, or January. In February, the

combative spirit is still great, but it is more lively and elastic than before. Sullen abuse, dogmatic denunciation, and positive assertion, lapse into a sardonic tone ; a symptom of amendment, which, in March, resolves itself into irony. In April, we begin to jest, and symptoms of conciliation become apparent. In May, we agree so far as we can, provided the breach be not irreparable, to merge differences and be friends, and to drop all unnecessary discussion. In June, with the exception of those exemplary patriots who sit in the House of Commons, no human being concerns himself with politics or polemics, but, following nature's suggestion, applies himself to strawberries and claret-cup. In July, old Father Thames, who is really a public benefactor, most judiciously stinks both Lords and Commons out of their magnificent palace ; and the grouse, partridges, and pheasants of August, September, and October, contribute largely to the safety of the body politic, by preventing speculative legislation during the period when they are attainable by the sportsman. The cackling of the geese in ancient Rome once saved the republic—the crowing of the muir-cock on our northern hills may possibly have rescued Britain from some impending but self-imposed calamity.

Sanguine as I was by temperament, I began to feel a sense of weariness and desolation steal upon me. The actual discomforts of my temporary home appeared greater than they really were. I continued, indeed, to work, but I did not work with the same spirit as before, and the current of my ideas no longer

flowed rapidly along. One forenoon, while I was in this cheerless mood, I received a visit from Carlton, who was evidently afflicted by the like spirit of ennui.

“Well, Sinclair,” said he, after a few preliminary remarks on the atrocious state of the weather, “I hope you are satisfied with your choice of a lodging. Lively street this, it must be confessed, though some say the river fog is not over-wholesome for the lungs. No want of music, though—there goes another barrel-organ! I wonder how you manage to work at all in the midst of such a medley of discords.”

“I admit that there is little to be said for my discretion in that respect. However, I shall make a change when better weather comes, and till then I must endure with patience.”

“Better make a change just now. Do you know, you look very jaded; and if you don't take some relaxation, I prophesy that you will be in for a nervous fever. Look here! I am going down to the country for the Christmas holidays, and I want to take you along with me; indeed, I have got a formal invitation for you to that effect from my former guardian, Mr Stanhope of Wilbury Hall. It is a charming place, and there will be a pleasant party.”

“Really, I do not think—”

“Nonsense! Why should you insist upon becoming a hermit? Why, man, if you go on long this way, you will stagnate down into a poor automaton, like one of the old illuminating monks! Trust to me. I

shall make all the necessary arrangements, and we'll start on Monday next."

"But I have some work on hand—"

"What of that? Cannot you write in the country as easily as in the town? There is a splendid library at Wilbury, and you can have it all to yourself. Come—I see symptoms of relenting in your eye. You have no idea of the miseries of a London Christmas, especially if spent in a lodging-house. You would be stifled to death with the odour of turkey and mince-pies—that is, when you went out of doors; for, judging from appearances, the excellent Mrs Lewson is not likely to rush into such extravagances. Besides, I have a personal motive in wishing you to go along with me."

"Well, since you say that, I shall avail myself of Mr Stanhope's invitation."

"Bravo! Now then, I shall be off to secure places on the coach. Recollect—Monday next. I'll send you a note of the hour."

Early on the day appointed, Carlton and I ascended as outside passengers the glorious "Defiance," which in those times, when the railway system was yet in its infancy, was the pride and wonder of the road. Much as our comfort has been enhanced by the traction of what a modern poet has called "the resonant steam-eagles," I am not sure that the new mode of locomotion is so hilarious as the old. In a railway train you profit little by the scenery—you dash so rapidly past town and grange that you hardly have a glimpse of

their outline—and you are utterly precluded from the grand old amusement of studying character on the road. The stage-coach, on the contrary, carried you into the very heart of the country ; gave you time to enjoy the scenery ; brought under your notice many a curious specimen of life and manners ; and enabled you, if the coachman or guard were disposed to be communicative, as was usually the case, to form a tolerably accurate estimate of the peculiarities and history of the neighbourhood. But it is of no use instituting comparisons between the living and the dead. Stage-coaches, except in a few very remote districts, are as defunct as the hand-loom or spinning-wheel, and will ere long become mere matters of tradition. I sometimes wonder what was the fate of all those gorgeous “ Defiances,” “ Eclipses,” “ Lightnings,” “ Rattlers,” and “ Sohos ?” Did the indignant proprietors when they found that they were fairly beaten off the road, and totally unable to compete with the screaming metallic competitors, bring together their defeated chariots, and sacrifice them as a magnificent holocaust ? Or have they been consigned to the infamy and disgrace of a back-shed, therein to remain until they rot to pieces, being tenanted in the mean time by cocks and hens, for lack of better company ?

No sooner had we passed the London suburbs, than the atmosphere became clear as by magic ; and on either hand was opened up an expanse of landscape, winter-clad indeed, but enlivened by the rays of the sun. On we went, past stately mansions just visible

in the midst of old spreading trees, through villages where many a smiling and happy face was seen at door and window ; the iron-shod hoofs of the horses ringing clearly as they galloped along the frozen road, till we reached the station for relay in the centre of some pretty market-town. There were visible active preparations for the coming Christmas. Most of the shops were already decked out and garnished with branches of holly, the scarlet berries contrasting gaily with the dark-green glossy foliage ; jolly Boniface, the apt representative of good cheer, came forth with his jug of grand old ale to administer to the wants of the passengers ; while bands of children, rosy with health and exercise, followed each other down the long slides, unrebuked by parochial severity. Those who maintain—and there are many who do so—that our country is not now entitled to its old appellation of “Merry England,” must either possess a strange obliquity of vision, or their spheres of observation must be limited to the stifling courts and crowded purlieus of great cities, and the haunts of misery and crime. Labour, when not unduly tasked and overweighted, is no impediment to mirth. Even in the busy workshops of Manchester and Birmingham few sullen faces are to be seen, unless indeed at a time when some one of the great springs of national industry has received such material injury that labour is suspended, or when the capitalist and the workman have been forced into unnatural collision. On such occasions it is true that general gloom prevails ; for how can we expect that

men should be mirthful or light of heart when poverty is staring them in the face—when their wives and children are suffering from lack of food, or starving in an inclement season—when the strong arm is compelled to be idle, and the spirit is too proud to brook the degradation of soliciting or accepting alms? There are certain conditions, and they are not confined to the poor, when care, or sorrow, or anguish, effectually banish mirth; and it may possibly be that, in a state of society so artificial and complicated as ours—when the competitive principle is actively at work, and each new discovery, though it may ultimately prove beneficial, has the immediate effect of displacing labour—such conditions are more frequent of occurrence than they were in the older and more simple times. But I do not believe that thereby habitual moroseness has been engendered. I do not believe—and my own observation leads me to quite a contrary conclusion—that the character of the people of England, regarded in the mass, has become materially altered, and that their once noted cheerfulness has been superseded by a sullen and vindictive spirit. I know that the Englishman hates tyranny and oppression of whatever kind—will not tamely submit to it, but will do battle for his rights to the death. Hence it is not wonderful if, when it appears to him that such tyranny does exist, and is, moreover, either expressly sanctioned or tacitly permitted by the law—whether that tyranny be the undue influence of capital exerted to depress labour, or the withholding of rights and privileges to which he

considers himself justly entitled—his language should often be vehement, and his attitude sometimes menacing and defiant. It is a great error—and it has ere now proved a lamentable one—to infer from this that the English people are discontented with their political constitution, or that they are prone to sudden and violent change. It is the interest of demagogues to represent them as such—to rear up imaginary grievances, or to magnify small ones into great ; but I am convinced, that throughout the length and breadth of England there exists a sound and hearty spirit, which, if it be not unwisely tampered with or abused for mere party purposes, will defy the utmost efforts of radicalism or infidelity to overpower.

In the course of our journey I received from Carlton a sketch of the family at Wilbury Hall. Mr Stanhope had, in early life, served with some distinction in the army ; but, at the close of the war, he withdrew from the military profession, married, and had ever since devoted himself to the management of his considerable estate, and the active discharge of the duties of a country gentleman. He was now a widower, with a son and daughter.

“ As for his manners and opinions,” said George, “ I shall leave you to judge for yourself. All I shall say is, that he has been very kind to me, and took an infinite deal of trouble in the management of my affairs when I was a minor. I doubt not that our American friend Mr Ewins—whom I trust we shall fall in with after he has completed his observations in the north—

would consider him rather behind the world in his notions ; and so perhaps he is, for you can hardly expect an old English squire, living amongst his ancestral oaks, and cultivating his Sabine farm, to keep pace with the headlong velocity of modern movement. For my own part, I think it is a blessing to the country that such men should be found forming the nucleus of a large and independent party ; otherwise ministers would be too prone—heaven knows they are prone enough !—to yield to what is cantingly termed the pressure from without, and to adopt, as part of the national policy, every scheme which is suggested by the interest or selfishness of the manufacturers. But here we are at the last stage, where the carriage from Wilbury is to meet us.”

I never was good at architectural description, so I shall spare the reader any attempt at sketching the exterior of Wilbury Hall, simply inserting the following extract from the *Beauties of England*, which is sufficient for my purpose. “ Sir Dudley Stanhope erected the present mansion, which was completed for his residence about the year 1616. It is a venerable edifice, but singular in its form, which is an irregular polygon. The upper windows command some fine views over the valley and adjacent country.” A respectable antiquity for a country-house, dating back to the reign of James I. and the days of Somerset and Villiers.

We were received by Mr Stanhope himself, a tall, handsome, florid man, whose cordiality removed at

once the awkwardness which usually attends introduction.

“George Carlton!” he cried, fairly embracing my friend, “Welcome back to Wilbury Hall! Why, boy, it is five long years since we saw you last; a great cut out of life, as you will know when you come to be as old as I am. And this is your friend, Mr Sinclair? Welcome, sir, welcome! Why, George, what a great strapping fellow you have become! Travel seems to have agreed with you; but we shan’t let you go abroad again, wandering over the face of the earth as if you had no home of your own. You must settle down among us; become a country gentleman, and do your duty to your country. We want young blood to take the place of us old fellows in these queer times. But come—let me show you to the drawing-room. I dare say you will hardly recognise my little Amy; she was a mere child when you left us.”

So saying, Mr Stanhope led the way up the staircase, and we entered a spacious and elegantly arranged apartment, in which several ladies were seated. It was now past sunset, and the room was lighted only by a blazing fire of logs, that threw out a ruddy glow. Ruddy as it was, it hardly could have accounted for the very deep flush upon Carlton’s cheek, as, in obedience to her father’s call, a graceful girl came timidly forward and extended her hand. I saw before me the model from which Carlton drew—the Real of his Ideal—the Saxon type of beauty—the sweet face and sunny locks of Saint Agnes.

I have sometimes envied the coolness and self-possession of those gentlemen who, fortified by long practice, can enter a drawing-room, having no previous knowledge of its inmates, with as much *sang-froid* and indifference as if they were lounging into a box at the opera, and commence a conversation without exhibiting the slightest embarrassment. Yet, after all, I doubt whether they are to be envied, for I apprehend that such demeanour must be the result either of remarkable self-complacency, or of a callousness of heart and imagination. It argues the absence, I think, of that chivalrous feeling towards the fair sex, which, in the middle ages, was carried to so extreme a length that, in the words of an old writer of romance, "a true knight should stand more awed and abated in the presence of beauty, than if he were summoned before the throne of the most puissant emperor of the world." Be that as it may, I, who had mingled little with English society, felt bashful and diffident, and was not sorry when the dressing bell summoned us to our several apartments.

When I again entered the drawing-room, I found a large company assembled, amongst whom I was surprised to recognise Sir George Smoothly, whose acquaintance I had made on board of the Rhenish steamer. The Baronet was pleased to favour me with a warm pressure of the hand, was particular in his inquiries as to my success in London, and not less so regarding the origin of my acquaintance with Mr Stanhope; but I had not forgotten Carlton's admonitory hint, and re-

stricted myself to such general replies as conveyed but little information.

Dinner was served in a spacious old hall, panelled with oak, and hung round with ancestral pictures; and the business of that important meal was conducted with that quiet regularity and unostentatious good taste which are the characteristics of a well-governed household. I did not feel myself very pleasantly situated, for my neighbour on the right was an elderly lady of swarthy complexion, whose immense turban gave her the look of a Turkish Imam; whilst on the other side I was flanked by a gentleman of some forty years of age, of Herculean dimensions, and elaborately got up, who nevertheless wore an air of extreme listlessness, and did not seem by any means inclined to enter into conversation. Not so the lady, who, perhaps guessing that a neophyte was delivered into her hands, began incontinently to talk.

“Have you been in this part of the country before, sir?”

“No, madam; I never had that pleasure.”

“Ah! I can assure you it is anything but a pleasure to those who know it best! You can have no idea what a terrible sort of people there are hereabouts—so corrupted, so wicked, so ungrateful, and so disrespectful to their superiors—I mean, of course, the lower orders. It sometimes positively makes me weep to think of their iniquity!” And she sipped a glass of sherry.

“Indeed! that is a very bad account of the neigh-

bourhood," said I. "Pray is there any special reason for their being so abandoned?"

"I cannot exactly say," replied the lady with a portentous quiver of her turban. "Some think it is because they are too well off, and some think it is the natural growth of original sin, which the regular clergy take no pains to keep down; but for my part, I think,"—and here she lowered her voice—"that it is owing in a great measure to the Jesuits!"

"To the Jesuits, madam?" said I.

"Yes, to the Jesuits, sir! Are you not aware that they absolutely swarm around us, and that they insinuate themselves into all kinds of families for the purpose of making converts? I shudder to tell you that I have detected two in my own household. One was the gardener, a Scotchman; but I soon found *him* out. Would you believe it, sir, he absolutely refused to eat pork upon a Friday, and admitted that he did not believe in the Book of Common Prayer?"

"But might not that, madam, be the effect of national prejudice and education? I happen to be a native of Scotland, and I must confess that, though I honour and adopt the prayer-book, I do not sympathise with the Saxon partiality for pork."

"You surely do not mean to tell me, sir, that the Scotch people don't use the prayer-book in their churches?"

"Unfortunately, madam, they do not."

"Then they must all be Jesuits, Unitarians, or something else that is equally shocking!"

“No, madam ; they are simply Presbyterians.”

“You don’t say so! I suppose they are a sort of Plymouth brethren?”

“Not exactly. But what further discoveries did you make in your household?”

“Well, sir, the other misguided creature was the laundry-maid, who seemed a good, quiet, inoffensive girl from Devonshire. I found her one evening in the kitchen confessing herself to an Irish groom, who, I am perfectly satisfied, was a priest in disguise!”

“That was startling, doubtless. Did you find her on her knees before him?”

“No—I rather think he was on his knees before her—but it amounts to the same thing.”

The Imaun was becoming a bore, but I could not shake her off. As her tongue was loosened (she never refused champagne) she launched out into all manner of complaints touching the backsliding and iniquities of the time. She told me that she was patroness of a female society for the propagation of flannel and cheap tracts, the former being withheld unless the catechumen could give a minute abstract of the latter. She inveighed against the parish clergyman, whom she accused of thwarting her efforts by beseeching her to temper her zeal with a little discretion, which she considered a clear proof that he also was at heart a Jesuit ; and she finally began a lecture on the approaching millennium, taking for her text-book the fifty-third treatise of an eminent dissenting divine in London, who had made a fabulous sum of money by his interpretations of the

Apocalypse, each new brochure being a direct contradiction of that which preceded it. I was becoming utterly bewildered by the woman's talk, when my neighbour on the other hand, observing my distress, kindly began a conversation which enabled me to get rid of the persecution. A more gentlemanly person than Mr Lumley—for such was the name of my new acquaintance—I have rarely encountered; but the effect which his fine figure and expressive countenance were calculated to produce, was somewhat marred by an affectation of extreme delicacy and languour. He looked as Achilles might have done when disguised at the court of Lycomedes; and he rarely spoke above his breath, as if the mere exertion of talking was too much for his physical energies.

“I am sure,” said he, after a few preliminary remarks which had the desired effect of relieving me from the attacks of the Imaun, who then fastened upon another victim, “you will pardon me for venturing to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* of so interesting and confidential a kind. But I am no stranger to the peculiarities of the inspired lady, and I really began to tremble for you as she advanced to the battle of Armageddon.”

“On the contrary, I am most grateful to you for the service,” said I, laughing; “I must acknowledge that my patience was on the point of giving way. I am curious to see her husband.”

“So should I be,” said Mr Lumley; “but no man of woman born was ever venturous enough to approach Miss Bootle with amorous or matrimonial intentions.

She is a fine specimen of the ancient British virgin—very good-hearted, very domineering; sensible on some points, on others as fantastical as a magpie. For the rest, I hold the old lady (whom I acknowledge to be a relative of my own) in some veneration not unmingled with fear. You have doubtless observed that she is a kind of Titus Oates in petticoats, brimful of information regarding a new popish plot, which is to shake this devoted kingdom to its centre, repress all liberty of conscience, and materially enhance the market-price of fish, sackcloth, and frankincense. Had she lived in the reign of Charles the Second, when Shaftesbury was in the ascendant, she would easily have found a spouse. Dangerfield or Bedloe would have proposed to her at once, on the strength of her Protestant revelations.”

This was said with so much quiet humour and comical nonchalance, that I could not forbear asking him to favour me, being an absolute stranger, with some account of others of the company.

“You pay me far too high a compliment,” said Mr Lumley, “in supposing that I can sketch character; for I am the laziest, dullest, and least observant of mankind, until you force me into action. I like claret and *kief*—you know what *kief* means?—absolute repose; and I have a high appreciation of eiderdown. I read the other day of some country near Persia—I forget the name of the particular district—where, when you want to have a siesta, you have only to send out a slave or two to shake the peach-trees, and straightway you are supplied with an odorous carpet of blossom a foot thick,

on which you may repose and dream, as if in early Eden. That would quite suit me. I am emulous of the sloth; notwithstanding which, when I get into the saddle, I flatter myself that I can astonish the light-weights; and I own that I am not despicable at rackets. But these are mere gladiatorial matters, and I ought to apologise for my egotism;—try this *entrée*, it is of decided merit—and I shall be happy to give you any information in my power; the rather, because I understand you are the friend of Mr Carlton, who ought, one day or other, to take a high position.”

“I have not had much experience of English society,” said I; “but one thing which has struck me rather forcibly is the inclination of accomplished and wealthy men to allow the public duties which they are fitted and even bound by their position to undertake, to pass into the hands of persons, who, whatever may be their talent, are in reality but political adventurers.”

“You had better say that to Carlton, who is still young enough to reform, and whose moral fibre is not relaxed. But are you not rather too hard upon adventurers? It is a common saying that a man in this country may aspire to any position; and if it be true that there is such a thing as political science—a point with regard to which I express no opinion—it would be hard to exclude any who profess to have mastered its details. But I really cannot afford to hazard my reputation as a *poco-curante* by talking in the strain of Seneca. You desired some information regarding the guests. Whom shall I begin with?”

“As you please.”

“Ah! then—*Place aux dames!* That gaily-dressed lady seated next our host is Lady Lorimer, a person of prodigious scientific acquirements. She corresponds with Buckland, is deep in geology, and has cultivated her talents to the utmost in the somewhat incongruous departments of millinery and mathematics.”

“A formidable lady!”

“Yes; to the uninitiated. Of all imaginable bores the most grievous is a Preadamite woman! I observe that she is even now holding forth to Sir John Hawkins upon the fossiliferous strata, a subject not exactly suited to the comprehension of the agricultural mind.”

“Pray, go on with your exposition.”

“Then there are two Misses Carrington. They sing well, dance well, have a turn for acting *proverbs*, and do not object to a flirtation. However, I would not recommend you to fall in love with either of them, unless you are a *millionaire*, either present or in prospect. Their mamma, who is somewhere on this side of the table, has some outrageous notions about settlements.”

“I shall observe your caution, and regard them as beings of another sphere!”

“O, they can be quite terrestrial when they please, I assure you; and even exceedingly condescending. They love incense as dearly as the Peris who subsist entirely upon odours. Then there is Miss Stanhope, a very sweet girl indeed—pretty, gentle, and affectionate. By the way, your friend Carlton appears to be making

himself wondrously agreeable. Handsome dog! If I were in love with Amy now, I should feel extremely jealous; but fortunately I have no energy."

"And the other lady?"

"O, that is Miss Stanhope's great friend, a Miss Beaton. I hope you admire her, for she is a decided beauty, and what is more, a very charming girl. Her father is a London merchant and Member of Parliament—one of the rising men of the day; by repute a sort of city Cæsus, bold, speculative, and enterprising. It is said that Peel has a high opinion of his judgment, and consults him on financial matters."

The appearance of Miss Beaton certainly justified the eulogy. Above the middle height, with her lustrous black hair braided over a queenly brow, and a complexion so delicate that the colour went and came like sunlight on a bed of roses; deep dark violet eyes, and a grace of gesture unparalleled—I thought that I had never gazed upon a creature more lovely and benign. I cannot tell why it should be so, but there are some women by no means wanting in charms, whom we cannot, by any exertion of fancy, disassociate from ordinary life. They belong essentially and entirely to our generation, such as it is, have no place in our reveries of the past, nor do their shadows appear in the enchanted world of our dreams. But others there are—and Mary Beaton was such—whom we cannot behold without either identifying them with some one of the splendid creations of Shakespeare, or assigning them a place in the scenes of chivalry and romance, in which,

ever and anon, we are fain to take refuge from the dull monotony of our existence.

Not long ago I heard an eminent philosopher deliver an address to a youthful audience, in the course of which he exhorted them to put away from their minds all romantic notions, and forego the perusal of all works of an imaginative nature, as these could only tend to weaken the intellect and to withdraw the mind from the contemplation of worthier themes. I dissent utterly from such a doctrine. Stifle the imagination, and you take from the inner man all the light and glory and vivid charm of existence—you make him colour-blind, unsympathetic, passionless, and repulsive—you rob him of the heart of flesh, and substitute an organ of stone. Let science have its place and precedence, but do not ask us to forego the pure delights of fancy or the kindly influences of poesy; for these are to the mind what the silent dews of night are to the thirsty earth—they cover its bare surface with verdure, they stimulate the plant, and prepare the bud to expand under the eye of morn into a beautiful and odorous flower. It may be well that we should uncover our heads with reverence at the name of Newton; but will any one have the hardihood to deny that Shakespeare and Scott have contributed more largely to the sum of human enjoyment and intellectual culture than the whole venerable phalanx of the men of science and discovery?

Why do I write thus? Simply to express my remembrance, still vivid, of the hour when the conviction

first dawned upon me that romance and reality are not things entirely separated and irreconcilable—that the former is not a mere abstraction, but a subtle and potent essence, capable of animating, embalming, purifying, and sustaining us through our daily pilgrimage and toil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TABLE-TALK.

“As for the gentlemen,” continued Mr Lumley, “there is really little to be said. You cannot expect to find such variety of character at a Christmas party in a country house as would suffice for the requirements of a first-rate comedy ; and I rather think I shall leave you to form your own conclusions, more especially as the ladies are about to withdraw.”

After-dinner conversation varies much according to the usual occupations and habits of the company. If you are doomed to take your claret with a set of sporting men, you must make up your mind to hear a great deal on the subject of horse-flesh and runs with the Pytchley and Quorn. If lawyers predominate, the chances are that they begin to talk shop, and become exceedingly tiresome by discussing knotty points of law with as much volubility and keenness as they possibly could exhibit at the bar. Manufacturers converse of markets, and trade, and samples, and improvements in machinery ; while country squires

naturally become plaintive about crops or enthusiastic about over-fed oxen. Literary men deal in pungent anecdotes about their fellow-labourers in the vineyard, and canvass their shortcomings with a gusto which ought to convince the most sceptical of their zeal for the purity of the profession. The company at Wilbury, however, was of a mixed kind, though the agricultural interest predominated, and the conversation gradually took a political turn.

The country was at that time in a state of considerable excitement, resulting from various causes. In the first place there had been great depression and consequent distress both among the agricultural and the manufacturing population ; and that, almost as a matter of course, had led to agrarian outrage and urban strikes. There were reports from several counties of rick-burnings so numerous as to justify the belief that there existed a deliberate scheme of destruction. In Wales, gangs of miscreants disguised in women's clothes, and calling themselves " Rebecca and her daughters," assembled nightly for the demolition of the turnpikes. Chartism was very rampant and even alarming ; and the Anti-corn-law League was just then beginning to make a considerable noise, though it did not succeed in engaging the entire confidence of the masses. The minister of the day, Sir Robert Peel, was then cautiously and almost furtively taking the initiative steps for making vast alterations in the commercial policy of Britain ; thereby exciting no little jealousy and apprehension among a large section of the country

party, who, though open to conviction had a matured scheme of policy been laid before them, objected to be either coerced or led blindfold. Passive obedience has long ago been exploded as a principle between subject and monarch ; but here was a minister who not only expected but exacted it from his followers, and was notoriously irascible at the slightest symptom of hesitation. I am not, I trust, insensible to the many good qualities of that distinguished statesman, nor shall I even question the abstract propriety of the commercial system which he latterly advocated with success ; but I cannot accord to him the praise of having been a skilful tactician, seeing that his conduct was such as gradually to alienate from himself the confidence of the party whom he aspired to lead. A tortuous or underhand policy, however speciously vindicated, has never found favour in the eyes of English gentlemen. Plausible reasons alone will not content them. They must be satisfied that the arguments adduced in justification of any important measure are such as have really operated upon the conviction of the speaker. And hence it is that the speeches of lawyers, however eloquent or ingenious they may be, rarely make much impression upon the House of Commons ; for extreme plausibility, which is the chief aim of the practised pleader, always begets a doubt as to the sincerity of his conviction.

Other circumstances, of a totally different nature, caused at that time much excitement among the country gentlemen. The growth of the railways,

regarded at first rather with curiosity than suspicion, had been progressing for several years. Important towns, great seats of manufacture and marts of trade, had been brought into more intimate connection by the locomotive engine; and trunk lines to convey passengers and expedite traffic from one end of the kingdom to the other were now in the course of construction. The necessity for, at least the great advantage of such communication being admitted, the movement so far was considered a good and wholesome one. It was calculated to benefit the labourer, the mechanics, and the iron-master—it opened a new field, and apparently a favourable one, for the investment at home of capital which otherwise might have been squandered or lost in foreign speculation or loan—and to the tourist and traveller it promised advantages, which a few years before would have been regarded as equally fabulous with the mode of transport by means of magical carpets so frequently referred to in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Here and there, indeed, some great landed proprietor, the sanctity of whose parks or the privacy of whose domain was to be violated by the screaming engine, made fierce opposition to the lines; but the directors, justly conceiving that human squires would not prove more inexorable than the Colchian dragon, took occasion to administer such copious draughts of the *aurum potabile* as disarmed the hostility of their opponents.

But, as at the Californian or Australian diggings, the discovery in a new locality of a single nugget of

gold instantly creates the rush of a thousand desperadoes towards the spot, so did the success of those early railways, and the high price which their shares commanded in the market, stimulate the cupidity of the British public, and transport them utterly beyond the boundaries of reason and of prudence. Trunk communication, it was confidently asserted, was not sufficient, even with the aid of branches which might subsequently be made, for the pressing wants of the country. The system so developed must go on, and that immediately, until Britain should be covered by a vast network of railways. To lag behind when others were pushing forward was a palpable folly and a positive crime—to let capital remain idle when it could be so usefully employed, was next thing to insanity. The true Dorado which Raleigh had crossed the ocean to seek for and explore, was at last discovered to be our native English soil.

The lawyers scented the prey from afar, and chuckled gloatingly at the prospect of unlimited fees. Engineers by the hundred sprang up into life and being, like the stones which Deucalion hurled over his shoulder. Projectors mapped out the country, and compiled outrageous advertisements. Traffic-takers betook themselves to the practical study of the whole art of lying. Men, whose entire worldly property did not exceed fifty pounds, or who were positively worth less than nothing, contracted engagements for thousands, in the full confidence that, long before payment was required, they could dispose of their scrip at a profit. Talk of *rou-*

lette or *rouge-et-noir* ! Continental gambling shrunk into insignificance when compared with the magnitude of English Railway hazard !

Railways, however, cannot be constructed without ground on which to lay them down ; and many proprietors, taking alarm at the extent of the mania, and perhaps not feeling quite satisfied as to the sufficiency of the security tendered, were unwilling that their lands should be bisected and cut up, and would not even allow the projectors to make a preliminary survey. But the crafty engineering staff was not to be so baffled. What they could not take by force they were resolute to compass by guile ; and accordingly they made their way over the country in all manner of disguises, attracting as little attention as possible when noting down their observations ; or, when challenged as trespassers, abandoning their design by day to renew it by night with aid of moon or lantern. Many strange stories were told of encounters that had taken place under such circumstances ; but on the whole it was generally allowed that the surveyors had the best of it, their superior astuteness enabling them to throw dust in the eyes of the stolid watchmen.

“ So it is actually proposed to make a railway from Goatshead to Ditchington,” said Sir John Hawkins, a burly representative of the order of baronets. “ That is really too bad ! There is no call whatever for such a line, and it will cut up both our properties, Stanhope. I don’t know what you may be inclined to

do, but I am determined to oppose it, even though I should be compelled to go to the House of Peers."

"Well, I suppose there can be no doubt of their intentions," said Mr Stanhope. "They made application to me—quite civilly, I must say—for permission to take a survey; but as I am as much against the line as you are, I thought it my duty to refuse."

"Quite right! There is no standing the impudence of those fellows. What title have they to ask Parliament to compel me to surrender the land which my family have possessed since the reign of Henry the Fifth, for the purpose of trundling along their bales of cotton and calico? Have they not a canal already, and is that not sufficient for their wants? I tell you what, Stanhope; I don't like the posture of things at all. It appears to me that Peel is systematically playing into the hands of the manufacturers, and using our support in the mean time to throw us ultimately overboard."

"Nay, nay!" said Sir George Smoothly; "You must not judge Sir Robert too harshly. It cannot be denied that he is a very sagacious man. That was a wonderful idea of his advising us to attend to the registers."

"I can see nothing wonderful in it," said Sir John Hawkins. "It was sound common sense, to be sure; but Peel had not the credit of originality. The advice was first given to the party by Alison, and Peel adopted it verbatim."

"That shows his great talent for appropriation," said Sir George. "Of what use is a good idea unless it be practically enforced?"

“Appropriation? humph!” said Sir John, “I think we are likely to see that talent exhibited in still greater force. There’s the Income-tax—do you think he has behaved fairly to us in regard to that? I was one of those, and I am not ashamed to confess it, who cheerfully consented to its being laid on, on the distinct understanding that it was only to be a temporary impost. For that we had Peel’s own express assurance. Well—here it is still hanging like a millstone round our necks, and, for anything I can see, it will be made a permanent burden.”

“But you must admit,” urged Sir George, “that it is a fair tax in principle.”

“I admit nothing of the kind,” replied the indignant Sir John. “It presses far more heavily upon the land-owners than on any other class. Don’t you see that while we are taxed on rental, the manufacturers are taxed on profits only, and are allowed to make their own returns? But what is the use of arguing? It is quite clear to me that the tendency of modern legislation is to abolish indirect taxation, and to raise the whole annual revenue from realised property. I hope you like that prospect, Sir George! I, on the contrary, am old-fashioned enough to regard it as deliberate confiscation.”

“We have not come to that yet,” said Mr Stanhope; “and I should be sorry to think so hardly of Sir Robert Peel as you do, Hawkins. Certainly he has exhibited no leaning towards the Manchester men, whose organised agitation is becoming rather formidable.”

“Wait a little,” said Sir John; “before you and I are much older we shall see him on terms of friendly relation with Cobden. Mark my words—he will drive our party to a split, and then take up with the Radicals.”

“Do you really think so, Sir John?” said Dr Wayles, the vicar of the parish, a quiet gentlemanly man of singularly mild demeanour. “I have a very great horror of the Radical party, who, I have observed, are for the most part Unitarians—as hostile to the Church as were the Independents in the days of Cromwell, and much more depraved in their creed, since we cannot admit them to be Christians. Surely Sir Robert Peel can never sink so low as to fraternise with men like these.”

“Wait till the Jews get into Parliament, Doctor,” said Sir John, “and you will see something to astonish you.”

“I trust such a thing will never come to pass in my day,” said Dr Wayles; “even Cromwell would have shrunk from such profanation.”

“True, Doctor; but old Noll was a very different sort of man from your modern demagogues. Regicide and usurper as he was, he had a stout English heart; and would sooner have parted with his right hand than allow the country to be humiliated in the eyes of foreigners; whereas these Manchester fellows think of nothing but trade and profits.”

“Trade and profits,” said Sir George Smoothly, “are very excellent things. It is our principle at the Treasury to give every possible encouragement to trade,

and to lighten the weight that presses on the springs of industry."

"Ay!" grunted Sir John. "It strikes me that I have heard that sentence uttered in another place. Whenever people talk about the springs of industry, and that sort of metaphorical nonsense, I know that they are meditating mischief, and that it is full time for the country gentlemen to look to the safety of their purses. As for those fellows who make a pretence of shouting for economy, they are a pack of mean hucksters, who grudge every shilling that is paid for the maintenance of the army, and would reduce the navy to a mere skeleton. I read a speech delivered by one of their leading men the other day, in which he asserted that war would henceforth be an utter impossibility, and that the reign of peace would be inaugurated by the free interchange of commodities."

"Doctrines of that sort," said Mr Stanhope, "have been broached before now; and it is curious to observe that they have always been most boldly enunciated, and greedily received, just on the eve of some terrible convulsion of society. Peace and fraternity were the professed leading ideas of the originators of the great French Revolution; but the results were war, anarchy, and ruin."

"Ay," said Dr Wayles, "and France has never yet recovered from the shock. Great she may be hereafter; but her greatness cannot be abiding until she has done penance for the awful crime committed on that day when the nation deliberately denied their God,

and worshipped at the feet of a barlot. Religious fanaticism is a frightful thing ; but far worse is it when all religious faith has disappeared from the land, when the altars are broken down, the sanctuaries profaned, and the cry of prayer no longer ascends to heaven ! Then, indeed, the divine Spirit ceases to contend with the madness and impiety of man. The messengers of the Most High are recalled, as when the voice was heard saying—‘Let us depart from hence,’ in the temple of Jerusalem, when that guilty city was tottering to its fall ; and in their place come the demons of lust, and rapine, and revenge ; and God’s fair world is made a field of slaughter and desolation !”

“ Really now, Doctor,” said Sir George Smoothly ; “you allow your zeal for the Church to carry you somewhat too far. We must do something to conciliate the Dissenters—that every one admits to be a necessity ; and if there should be a paring down of benefices, and an abolition of church-rates, why——”

“ You do not understand me, sir,” replied the old man. “The Church of England, were it to be separated from the State to-morrow, and stripped of every worldly possession, would still discharge its high and holy function as the interpreter of the truth, and the messenger of salvation. But how can we maintain silence when we hear it averred that another gospel besides that of Christianity is necessary for the regeneration of mankind ?”

“ Nevertheless, Doctor,” persisted Sir George. “ It

is the opinion of some of our best men and most profound economists, that hereafter we shall have to depend for prosperity and the continuance of peace rather on free trade than on religious principle. I am very far from wishing to undervalue the usefulness of the clergy, but I don't think they should be allowed to meddle with matters beyond their immediate sphere. Religion is an excellent thing for the masses; but when transported into the region of politics, it is apt to degenerate into bigotry."

"Such, I am aware," replied Dr Wayles, "is the opinion professed by many; and hence has arisen that cold indifference and carelessness as to things spiritual, which is even now but too prevalent among the learned and the great. At all times we are but too prone to magnify the intellect of man, and to claim for him the functions of Omnipotence; but now, in the pride of our hearts, we are beginning to question the justice of His laws, and to doubt the value of His ordinances. O, gentlemen, if it ever happen that the people of England, abused by false doctrines and misled by philosophic teachers, should renounce the faith of their fathers, and cease to acknowledge their dependence on the Almighty, or to invoke his aid, then be sure that the might of Britain will decay, and her boasted empire crumble into dust, as the tower of Babel was smitten down by the red thunderbolts of heaven!"

So saying, the worthy Doctor rose and left the table, followed almost immediately by the rest of the com-

pany, for all seemed to feel that the solemnity of the address was such as to forbid a return to a lighter strain of conversation.

The evening passed by very pleasantly in the drawing-room. Young Frank Stanhope, a nice lad just from Oxford for his Christmas vacation, and blessed with exuberant spirits, began a vehement flirtation with the younger Miss Carrington; whilst the elder, Teresa, a sentimental *blonde*, seemed intent upon arousing the dormant energies of Mr Lumley, whose attitude as he reclined on the sofa was that of a confirmed invalid. George Carlton and Miss Stanhope appeared to be deeply interested in the inspection of a book of drawings; and Miss Bootle, after a vain attempt to seduce Dr Wayles into a discussion upon the doctrines of Loyola, pounced upon Sir John Hawkins, and craved his opinion as to the real nature of the Apocalyptic beast; which mystery the worthy baronet at once solved by declaring his conviction that it was typical of the Anti-corn-law League. Then followed music. The Misses Carrington sang, in a high bravura style, duets from the last popular Italian opera, which they executed neither better nor worse than the majority of young ladies who, being gifted with naturally flexible voices, have had the advantage of the best teaching which London could afford. But as for anything like feeling or adequate expression, that was utterly beyond their power. I wonder if the time will ever arrive—it has been very long in coming—when the fair young girls of England shall be persuaded that

the inordinate pains which they take to qualify themselves for exhibiting a fifth-rate imitation of the reigning *prima donna* are utterly thrown away, in so far as their audience is concerned, and awake to the sad truth that the cavalier who so sedulously turns the pages of the music is all the while thinking of the lamentable contrast which their forced vocal organs exhibit to the ease, fulness, flexibility, and deep emotion of such artists as Grisi or Alboni. The sooner they become aware of this truth the better, for really nothing can be more unpleasant than to listen to this kind of singing, which is a mere vocal exercise, leaving no impression on the heart, and arousing no sort of sympathy—which, unless music can convey it, is no better than a rhythmical experiment. In singing as in declamation, the one grand and crowning excellence is the truthful expression through the words, of the passion or emotion which the words are intended to convey. Unless this point can be reached, all the minor and subsidiary accomplishments and training are of no avail, or rather create a presumption that the sympathies of the singer are defective. Now, in order to attain to that point, the singer must not only thoroughly understand the situation of the represented character, but take up the entire spirit of the particular strain; whereas it is notorious that the majority of our would-be drawing-room syrens, who profit (as they think) by Italian teaching, simply learn the words by rote, and do not even know distinctly what kind of emotion they should counterfeit. Ah, young ladies! if you seek to win

admirers through your voices—and the voice of woman has a most potent charm, and if rightly used, can thrill the manly bosom more deeply perhaps than you can conceive—you will do well to give up those unprofitable, and, for you, disadvantageous attempts to vie with foreign professional artists, and betake yourselves to the study of your native melodies. Sweeter, more pathetic, more plaintive, and more spirited music does not exist than what you can cull from the English, Scottish, and Irish collections; and the results which you fondly expect, but will never realise, from a shrieked Italian aria, must assuredly follow if you obey natural instincts, and apply yourselves to British song.

Of this we had an instance, or rather more than one, that evening at Wilbury Hall; for Amy Stanhope, though not gifted with much power of voice, sang very sweetly a madrigal by Ben Jonson, that fine old rough-cast frequenter of the Mermaid and glory of the age in which he lived, in whom the elements were most curiously if not gently mingled; and who ever and anon, though shagged as Father Winter, threw out blossoms fit to be gathered as a posy by the hands of Flora.

But I heard, and having heard it, never could forget, from the lips of Miss Beaton, a strain which took me wholly by surprise. She seemed unwilling to sing; but being pressed, took her place at the harpsichord, and touching merely the notes, so that the music be-

came, as in the old days of minstrelsy, simply indicative of the thought, she sang with a pathos and power which I never heard paralleled, the ballad of "Helen of Kirkconnell." So strong, evidently, was the emotion which she felt, that the conclusion was nearly inaudible ; and I doubt whether the Misses Carrington retired to rest that evening in a very Christian spirit, so decided, and even intense, was the admiration which was excited by the performance of Miss Beaton.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

BREAKFAST, at Wilbury Hall, was a regular meal, at which it was understood that all the company should assemble; not, as in some houses, a prolonged and desultory repast, to suit the habits of the lazy or irregular. Ten o'clock was the stated hour; and here I may remark, as the question of early rising seems anew to be earnestly discussed, that ten, during the winter months at least, appears to me to be an admirable point of compromise between the slothful and the restless. It is a horrid nuisance, either in country or town, to be compelled to leave the warm and comfortable couch in the grey and cheerless dawn, to perform an unsatisfactory toilette by gas or candle light; and precipitately to undergo that semi-scalping process which the majority of the sons of Adam, who still adhere to the use of razors, are doomed matutinally to inflict upon their smarting countenances. Let the sun by all means have the precedence. It is time enough to rise when he has appeared above the horizon; but to be moving before

him, is an act of disrespect to the sovereign orb of day. Able counsel, who have undertaken the defence of the sluggard who maintains that he may lawfully and legitimately keep possession of his pillow until eleven, have framed a tolerable argument in his behalf; but they cannot subvert the leading dictum of Solomon, who, being himself of luxurious habits, has pronounced authoritatively on the other side. Ten, therefore, we may assume to be the proper hour for breakfast, and it was so observed at Wilbury.

During the meal the plans for the day were discussed and arranged with that perfect freedom of choice to all the guests which renders English country life so peculiarly attractive. Some of the gentlemen, who were keen sportsmen, determined upon beating the covers; one or two had business at the county town: while others declared that the whole morning would scarce suffice to enable them to get rid of their correspondence. I daresay that George Carlton would very willingly have remained at home to act the part of a squire of dames, nor should I have felt any objection to follow his example; but as we could hardly frame a proper excuse for doing so, we agreed to take a ramble together. I own I had a certain hankering after the pheasants and woodcocks; but, not having contributed to the national revenue as a sporting licentiate, I did not consider myself entitled to assist at the battue.

Therefore, some little while after the sportsmen had sallied forth, we began our walk through a noble country, which even in winter gave token of its fer-

tility. The farmyards were filled with the bounteous produce of the bygone season ; we heard the merry whirring of the fanners, and the measured strokes of the flail ; and great fat sheep, worthy to have been consumed by the captains of the Grecian host, nibbled complacently at their turnips, and shook their stumpy tails as if in commendation of the merits of the juicy esculent. Mr Stanhope was not one of those shortsighted squires, who, acting under the niggardly advice of their stewards, consider that they provide sufficiently for the well-being of the labourers, if, in some remote corner of the estate, they are allowed to inhabit sheds wherein their families are packed without regard to comfort, decency, or ventilation. He held the doctrine that the day-labourer, being unable to erect a house for himself, was entitled to such accommodation on the estate of the employer as would attach him to home, and strengthen the social ties and domestic affections which are so apt to be loosened and impaired, or even to disappear altogether, under the pressure of abject misery. It is in most instances the want of a happy home, and the sense of discomfort there, that drives so many labouring men to the alehouse, where they sot away their small earnings, heartlessly indifferent to their wives, who may be suffering from cold and hunger. Then, through intemperance, arises the temptation towards poaching, which affords so easy a means of obtaining an illicit supply ; and that step once taken, the ruin of the man is sealed. Nowhere in England have I seen more substantial and comfortable cottages

than were provided at Wilbury for the accommodation of the labourers ; and it was quite evident that this wise liberality was properly appreciated, for the little gardens were without exception trim and well stocked with herbs and bushes, the houses were scrupulously clean, and Master Pig, in his own quiet snuggerly behind, gradually developed himself into proportions which would have rejoiced the heart of Mr Huxtable.

George was unusually taciturn. I knew what was on his mind, but thought it best to leave him to come out with it, and therefore did not hazard any remark that might lead the conversation towards the subject. I think that the *confessio amantis*, when it is to be made, should always be spontaneous. I felt fully satisfied that Carlton was dying to begin ; but some men are very shy about making these kind of confidences even to their most trusted friends—and George was one of that order. At last he broke the ice.

“Sinclair, I think I told you that I had a personal motive in wishing you to come down with me to Wilbury?”

“Yes, George, you did.”

“Do you understand now what my motive was?”

“I have a shrewd guess ; but, in order to avoid error, you had best explain.”

“Well, then, I wished you to see Amy Stanhope. I am a strange being, Sinclair—in some things quite an enigma to myself. In regard to most matters, I can form strong resolutions, and adhere to them with the utmost tenacity of purpose, which you may call obsti-

nacy, if you will ; but on other points I am as nerveless, helpless, and undecided as a child."

"Therein I apprehend you are not singular. Does not Ariosto tell us that the great paladin Orlando, that lion of Christian chivalry, had his wits unsettled by love, hung up his armour on a tree, and walked the forests as a sylvan?"

"Pshaw ! Let Ariosto alone for the present. Poetical examples are marvellously akin to banter, for which I am in no humour. What I mean to say is this, that I have been for years living as it were in a dream, waiting for the realisation of my hopes ; and now, when all that I had wished for and prayed for appears within my reach, a deep sense of my own unworthiness paralyses every energy of my nature—makes a coward of me—fills me with irresolution—and prevents me from going further."

"You must explain yourself somewhat more clearly, Carlton, for I really do not comprehend you."

"Well, have a little patience. I daresay I am talking nonsense : for love has a language of its own, and that language is not always of the clearest kind. Besides, it is a very difficult thing adequately to convey one's own sensations to another. But thus it is:—When a youth, I was much at Wilbury—Mr Stanhope being my guardian. Amy was then a beautiful child—you see what she is now—and I, being fantastical, and not altogether unimaginative, began to dream dreams, and to see visions for the future, in all of which a certain fair young head was the predominant feature. In short,

I constructed for myself a romance, of which Amy was the heroine, and I hoped that the day might come when, the bud having expanded into the blossom, I might win and wear it as my own. I grant you that such a sentiment as mine was out of the usual course. Boys commonly begin by falling in love with women older than themselves, and pass from the worship of one idol to that of another, until their affections are squandered away; and love, or what passes by its name, becomes a thing of custom rather than a holy talisman. It was not so with me. I went abroad, as you know; but I carried with me the image of Amy Stanhope; and often, in the hour of temptation, such as besets us all, that image has saved me from the commission of folly or of crime. But still I remained a dreamer. I have done nothing—I have made myself no name—I have performed no service to my kind—I am a mere useless atom in the vast ocean of humanity. And therein lies the failure—the woeful incompleteness of my romance. I had foreshadowed the day when I might approach her who has long been the loadstar of my heart, and ask her in all humility to become the partaker of my fortunes and my fame. Fortune, indeed, I have—for that was the result of accident; but fame—reputation—honourable distinction—alas! Sinclair, I have utterly neglected the opportunity of attaining to these. I have not one single leaf of laurel to lay before her feet.”

Intimate as I had been with Carlton, I was not prepared for such a burst as this. I knew that he had a

chivalrous nature, and high romantic notions ; but that, in our degenerate days, it should be my lot to hear a confession, more transcendental of its kind than was likely to have occurred even to such an enthusiast as Sir Philip Sidney, filled me, I acknowledge, with astonishment.

“ Pardon me, dear Carlton,” said I after a pause, during which I tried to think how I might best contribute to dispel this hallucination, “ for saying that I think your conclusion is much more fantastical than your dream. You lament that you have no fame ; what sort of fame would you have ? These are not times when distinction can be won by knightly deeds—such fame as professional success can give, I know you utterly despise. What then remains but a political career, in which you have always declined to embark ; or a literary one, which is still open to you, if you have the ambition to proceed ? And, after all, what is fame ? Ask those who have attained it, and they will tell you that it is no better than a bubble. What says your favourite Milton ?—

‘ Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
 Comes the blind Fury with th’ abhorred shears,
 And slits the thin-spun life—’ ”

“ Ah, but,” said Carlton, “ you must not omit the answer, and a noble one it is—

‘ But not the praise,
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears ;
Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies ;
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.’ ”

“ But don't you see,” I replied, “ that there is an ambiguity in this ; for Milton, though he uses the word fame, evidently implies nothing more than the upright and conscientious discharge of duty. Come, come, Carlton ; you are really too sensitive about this. If you are so deeply attached to Miss Stanhope, why should you trifle with her happiness and your own ? Can it be your wise purpose not to approach her until you have written half-a-dozen books that shall make a noise in the world, or deliver the same number of set speeches, which shall fall flat on the ear of the House of Commons ? For shame, man ! get rid of these fancies, which are but the whims of an over-indulged brain ; take your proper place in society, for you have been too long secluded from the world ; seek occupation, and if fame lies in your way, you will find it at the proper time. Oh, you can be practical enough in your suggestions to others—be a little more confident and consistent as regards yourself.”

“ Well, perhaps you are right, for I have been a sad dreamer. And to tell you the truth, Sinclair,” he added, with a peculiar smile, “ I am not sure but that

for the last quarter of an hour I have been talking terrible nonsense. You are very good to bear with me so patiently. But the main scope and tendency of my confession remains—”

“That you are in love?”

“Very deeply indeed. And then—”

“Why, according to the recognised practice in such cases, when, as here, there is no impediment, the next step should be a proposal. I do not think it at all probable that you will meet with a decided repulse.”

“Ah! but, Sinclair, that is the very thing I dread. Amy knows nothing of this.”

“How should it be otherwise? Why, you have been but one evening in her company! Do you remember our old acquaintance, Colonel Lafond, whom we met at Turin?”

“The man who had been in Algeria, and who was so inveterate in his addiction to *absinthe*? Perfectly. But why do you ask?”

“Were you not present one evening when he told us about an interview he had with a Moorish magician?”

“I rather think not.”

“Well; it was to this effect. There was in Oran a man called Maugraby, famous for his skill in the occult sciences; a fellow, in short, who practised divination, or something like it, and was said to possess the power of showing things at a distance. This he did, not by the old means of the magic mirror, but by conjuring up apparent living realities. Those who had availed themselves of his assistance (and there were many such

among the French), declared that they had seen unmistakably the likenesses of their absent friends ; nay, had even heard them converse, as if they themselves had been spiritually present. All this was very wonderful ; but it was further remarked, that of those who consulted Maugraby some returned happy and cheerful, while others evinced symptoms of deep despondency, and in one or two cases suicide was the result. Lafond, who had no faith in magic, was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery ; and being a man of some fortune, which few French officers are, he tried to bribe the adept, but in vain. However, a threat or two judiciously administered of the possible revival of the Inquisition on ground pertaining to the eldest son of the Church, wrought so upon the fears of Maugraby that he at last consented, in return for a *douceur* of a thousand francs, coupled with a solemn promise that the secret should not be divulged in Algeria, to reveal his process to the colonel."

"And what was the secret?"

"Simply this. Maugraby told Lafond that there was in his possession, and had been in that of his family for centuries, two herbalist recipes of the rarest efficacy and power—that certain materials, duly collected and compounded, had the virtue, when used in the way of fumigation, to produce light and airy visions ; and others, treated in the same manner, weighed heavily and noisomely on the brain. We know familiarly what are the effects of opium, and of haschisch or wild hemp ; and those preparations of the

magician, though taken by way of inhalation, were of the same kind. Maugraby confessed that, when any one applied to him for a cast of his art, he asked a few questions, from the answers to which he was able to perceive whether the foreboding was of good or ill ; and in accordance with what he observed to be the disposition of the visitor, he made his fumigation. The gloomy or jealous man straightway saw a vision of pain or infidelity—the cheerful man was thrown into a pleasant trance, realising a happy fancy, which he believed to be an actual truth ; and Maugraby protested that his whole magic art lay in the due administration of these two powerful agents.”

“ A very plausible explanation of African jugglery ! But what part of our conversation has suggested this story to you, Sinclair ? ”

“ I tell it to you by way of apologue, and you must be unusually dull if you fail to see the application. Hitherto you have been inhaling Maugraby’s noxious preparation, and you cannot see clearly or truthfully. Try the other sort, of the more genial kind, and your vision will undergo a change. But what have we here ? There seems to be a stir among the sportsmen.”

Our walk had led us to the vicinity of the covers which were that day to be beat for game, and for some time we had heard the frequent shots, single or double, of the parties who were shrouded by the plantations. But now there was a loud whoop, or kind of challengeery ; and not more than fifty yards in advance of us, a man bounded over a hedge with the agility of a roe-

buck, and commenced running at full speed along a sort of bridle-path or narrow lane, which we had selected for our walk. A minute or so afterwards, one of Mr Stanhope's keepers appeared in full chase, followed, to my great surprise, by the apathetic Mr Lunley, who displayed the fleetness of an Asahel; after whom came Frank Stanhope in the high glee of an exciting chase. There is nothing like action for knocking sentiment or any such twaddle on the head.

"A poacher, by Jove!" shouted Carlton; and he instantly dashed forward in the wake of Frank. I was not willing to be left behind; but seeing that, by a short cut across a meadow, I could probably save distance, I took that; and got so far ahead of the others as to have a good view of the fugitive. He was a tall, clean-made fellow, in the prime of life, not caparisoned as a poacher, but rather well dressed than otherwise; and his running, from its peculiar style, reminded me of the foot-racing which I had seen long ago at the pleasant border-meetings of Peebles and Inverleithen. But he had a hard competitor to contend with. The keeper, a rough Yorkshire tyke, whose muscles by constant exercise had become as strong and elastic as steel, and with whom "bellows to mend" was a merely figurative phrase, gradually gained on the runaway, and in another stride or two would have had him in his grasp; when, all of a sudden, the latter dropped upon his hands and knees across the path, and the Yorkshireman, unable to check the impetus of his career, fell headlong over him, his nose

involuntarily performing the disagreeable office of a ploughshare. The other gathered himself up and started anew; but by this time Lumley was well on his haunches; and I, being by favour of a turn of the lane in advance, stepped out and intercepted the fugitive.

Seeing this, he made no further attempt at resistance or flight; but, quietly folding his arms, assumed an air of as complete *nonchalance* as it was possible for a man panting from recent exertion to do.

“So we have you at last, you scoundrel!” said Lumley.

“You may keep the scoundrel to yoursel’, sir!” replied the other, in a strong Caledonian accent. “I’d have you to know that I’m as gude a man as ever stood in the shoes of your father’s son.”

“Confound your impertinence!” said Lumley, looking, however, somewhat puzzled, for the man certainly had not the appearance of a hawbuck game-depredator; “I have more than half a mind to give you a sound thrashing on the spot!”

“Doubtless you may do that, sir, if it be your will,” said the other undauntedly; “ye are four to one, and that’s long odds, and what you Englishers like. Oh, you needn’t gloom at me that gait, sir; it’s God’s truth I’m saying. Hit away, the haill four of you, and muckle credit you’ll get by it!”

“Hold back the keeper, Frank!” cried Lumley; for the aggrieved Yorkshireman, whose face was most woefully disfigured, was rushing frantically to the fray.

“Hold him back! What the fellow says is true enough. Be he what he may, he shall have fair-play.”

“That’s not unhandsomely said,” remarked the Scot, “for that chield with the bluidy neb looks unco unchancy. And now that you have found your breath—mine’s hardly back to me yet—doubtless ye will explain what for I have been chased in a free country, as if I were a hunted mawkin?”

“What were you doing in the plantation, sirrah?”

“I demur as to your right, sir, to ask the question. Nevertheless, without prejudice to that plea, I answer that I was there for no unlawful purpose.”

“No unlawful purpose! Are you not a poacher?” said Lumley.

“I scorn your words, sir!” answered the Scot. “Take me before a Justice of the Peace for search; and if you find fud or feather, shot, caps, or powder about me, I’ll be answerable to the law; but if not, I reserve my right to action of damages for wrongous detention of my person. I ken mair about *habeas corpus* than you maybe think.”

“I don’t know what to make of this fellow, Frank,” said Lumley, taking young Stanhope aside. “He certainly does not look like a poacher, but his bolting out of the wood was very suspicious. What was he about when you first observed him?”

“He was stooping down as if to avoid detection; and I am quite certain that I saw an instrument of some kind, probably an air-gun, in his hand. I suppose he threw it away as soon as we gave chase.”

“ Ah ! that’s a material piece of evidence. And, in good time, here comes one of the beaters with the very article in question. Now, my cool friend, we shall soon find out what you have been after. Why, what the devil is this ? a bludgeon ! ”

“ Lord help your e’en, man ! Do ye no ken a levelling-staff when you see it ? ”

“ A levelling-staff ! What, then, are you ? ”

“ A surveyor in the employment of the Honourable the Provisional Committee for the construction of the Grand Goatshead and Ditchington Junction Railway. ”

“ And what were you doing when we came up ? ”

“ I was taking a kind of scientific observation of the ground ; just as Buckland, or any other philosopher, might have done for the formation of a geological survey. ”

“ Well, Mr Philosopher, I suppose we must hold that you have cleared yourself of the suspicion of poaching. But are you aware that you are trespassing upon Mr Stanhope of Wilbury’s grounds ? ”

“ Stanhope of Wilbury ! ” repeated the Scot, taking a note-book from his pocket and making a pencil entry. “ I am obliged to you for the information. I wasna just sure who the land belonged to, but that will enable me to make out the schedule in due form. And now that we have had this pleasant crack, I’ll even bid you good-day. Lad, hand over that levelling-staff. ”

“ Not so fast, my friend ! ” said Lumley ; “ we have

found you here as a trespasser. Your implement, therefore, is legally forfeited, and goes with us."

"You're clean wrong, man!" replied the other; "you ken as little about the laws of your country as a kyloe does of mensuration. It's only when there's a trespass in pursuit of game that engines can be detained, and even then they cannot be seized *brevis manu*; they must be awarded by a judge. You might as well try to keep my breeks as my levelling-staff."

"Well, it's no use losing further time," said Frank Stanhope; "I suppose we must let the fellow go. Give him his staff, Tom. But I warn you, my friend, that if we catch you again trespassing on my father's ground, you won't get off so easily."

"Maybe ay, and maybe no," said the unabashed surveyor. "I'm thinking, though, that I am pretty weel through wi' Stanhope's ground for all preliminary purposes. So, good sport to you, gentlemen!"

"Stubbs—see him off the land," said Frank Stanhope. "Yet, no—hang it, I believe you would murder him at the back of the nearest fence! Tom, go you with him."

"What's the use of sending a laddie to show me the way?" said the surveyor; "I ken it brawly, and I'm no proud. Tam, my man, since Tam's your name, just gae ye back, and cry shoo to the pheasants; I hae nae need of a gillie. As for my friend in the corduroys, the state of whose neb I deplore, I bear him

nae kind of malice, though he shouldna coup himself over a gentleman as if he were a toom barrow running down a brae ; and if half-a-crown to buy him a sup of brandy wad be ony compensation—”

“ I’d loike to kick the liver oot o’ thee, thou dommed thief !” cried the aggravated Stubbs. “ Measter Frank, do ye joost let me ha’ one toorn up wi’ un, do ye now ! I’se gie un his sark fu’ o’ brucken banes !”

“ No, no !” said Lumley ; “ we must have no fighting here. Draw off your escort, Frank ; and let us get back to the cover without further delay.”

“ As to seeing him off the ground, Frank,” said Carlton, who had watched the foregoing scene with infinite amusement, “ you may leave that to Sinclair and myself. We’ll look after him.”

“ The Lord be praised for a good riddance !” said the Scot, after the sportsmen had moved away. “ That Yorkshireman would have been an ugly customer ! It’s a vera queer thing that thae Yorkshire and Lancashire lads are fit for little else than riding races, selling horses, and looking after game. It’s a singular dispensation of Providence, like that which makes a’ the folk in Selkirk become souters. Ye’ll mind Stephen Calvert, that Lord Traquair brought down to be his keeper, Mr Norman ? Weel, he was just such another as that Stubbs, wha’s back is the bonniest bit of his body.”

“ What !” cried I, in utter amazement—“ you seem to know me. Who are you ?”

“ Troth, I doubt whether you hae many aulder

freends in the world—or acquaintances I shall say, for I have a kind of inkling about degrees—and it's little wonder that you didna ken me, for I hardly kenn'd you. Whiskers make an unco difference, and sae does polite education ; but you're no the man you was, if you winna shake hands wi' Davie Osett ! ”

“ Davie—Davie Osett ! ” said I, wringing his hand, which cordially reciprocated to my grasp ; “ I had no more idea that it was you than the Emperor of China. Davie !—what, in the name of mystification, has brought you here ? ”

“ Deed, Mr Norman, it's no easy to say. We are a' wafts, drifting about like seaweed on the ocean, or in the gulf-streams, that auld Professor Jamieson used to speak of at the College. But you have doubtless gathered from what you heard me say, that I am here in the way of my profession, for a hantle o' things have happened since we last parted at the knowes of the Douglas Burn.”

“ I suspect,” said Carlton, “ that I am rather in the way here, and the best thing I can do is to take myself off. Don't volunteer explanations now, Sinclair—there will be ample time for that hereafter ; and in the meanwhile I shall keep my finger on my lip, otherwise this encounter would go very far to confirm the suspicions of Miss Bootle ; and there might be alarm for a rising of the Jesuits. Adieu, then—you cannot fail finding the road.”

“ That appears to be a sensible man,” said Davie ; “ and I am glad ye hae such circumspect acquaintances,

Mr Norman. Maist chields would hae held on through mere curiosity to get a glisk o' what was nae business o' theirs. And how has the world been using ye? But I needna speer. You look weel and strong; and glad I am to see you moving among the gentles, though as yet I hae seen little o' them mysel'."

"Well, but, Davie, tell me all about yourself, and about all the dear folk at home. Are they all well?"

"What should ail them to be otherwise? Father's as hale as a man can be on the wrong side of seventy, and he has taken anither sheep-farm up by the Winterhope. He's clean daft about breeding tups. And Auntie Eppie is to the fore yet, a wee thought plagned wi' the rheumatiz, but aye havering about you, and ca'ing you her precious lamb. Then my sister May, she's married four years back on Geordie Scott of the Cauldriggs, and has twa as sonsie weans as ever grat for their parritch. So that's the family chronicle up to the present time."

"But you, Davie—what tempted you away from the Forest?"

"Troth, Mr Norman, it was e'en the auld temptation that Adam couldna withstand in Paradise. I had a sair hankering for the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Ye see it disna do to bide a' one's days down yonder in the glens, doing naething but looking after sheep, and maybe driving them to the market. Folk hae got other notions now; and even about Peebles and Selkirk many a lad took it into his head that he would do better by emigrating to Canada, and working hard

until he could scrape as muckle siller together as would buy him a bit o' land of his ain, than by dragging on at hame as a ploughman or a shepherd. Some tried it, and got on grandly after a time, for they didna stint in their work; and then mair gaed after them. Then it came into my head that, if my father wad gie me five or six hundred pounds—he has hained a hantle mair than that, I can tell you, forbye the value of his stocks—I might go out to Canada too, and settle down on a bit lairdship, near one of the big lochs that they say are just like inland seas. But nae sooner did I mint the matter, than there was sic a howling as ye never heard. Ye wad have thought I had proposed to commit murder at the very least; sic a steer they made about it at the Birkenshaws. I was likened to the Prodigal Son, who asked his father for a portion in his lifetime, and was fain at last to content himself with the grumphy's husks—to Ishmael, who went out into the wilderness (I am sure, puir lad, that was nae fault o' his!)—to Rehoboam, who despised counsel, and I ken nae wha mair; till I was glad, for the sake o' peace, to give in, and pass my solemn word, that sae lang as there was breath in my father's body, I wad not set foot beyond British ground."

"And how came you to leave the Birkenshaws, Davie?"

"Why, ye see, that notion of mine about Canada had set my father a-thinking about me mair than he otherwise might have done—for fathers, though they may be fond of their sons, are aye sweer to let them out

o' their grip ; and he began to see that I might as weel hae some mair education than I had gotten. Sae I went into Edinburgh in the winter-time, and took twa or three sessions o' the College. I made naething o' Greek, or that argle-bargling that they ca' Logic ; but I took kindly to Mathematics, and wasna far frae getting a prize. Weel, when I came back, I told my father, ance for a', that I was minded to set up for myself, that I didna want to go into a sheep-farm, but that I would prefer a douce country profession, like that of a land-surveyor or valuator, for which there was a good opening. He was gey and weel pleased to hear that, for surveying is a highly respectable calling, and no unprofitable ; and the upshot was that I was entered as clerk and assistant to auld Jamie Wylie at Selkirk."

"Where, doubtless, you found your mathematical acquirements of some service?"

"Ye may say that, Mr Norman. Jamie Wylie, though but a snuffy body, and unco near, was weel up to the practical part o' the business ; and in less than six months I could measure you a field of turnips and lay out a plan as fairly as any man on the Border. Weel, just then, we began to hear tell o' the railways. There had been a sough about making them langsyne,—as far back, I've heard, as the days when Sir Walter was at Abbotsford,—but somehow or other the job fell through. There were few subscribers then but the lairds ; and as ilka ane o' them wanted three prices for his land, they couldna get up the capital. They hadna

yet discovered the wand that can conjure siller out o' folks' pouches as fast as the rod o' Moses brought water out of the rock. They kenned naething about premiums, or buying and selling in the market. It's a wonderful age this we live in, Mr Norman—a wonderful age for men that have their wits about them. I've heard tell that the fairies could make guineas out o' slate-stanes and withered leaves—Lord help ye! I've seen mony a chield that couldna hae paid for his breakfast, get a hundred pounds for a bundle of scrip that wasna worth a brass farthing!”

“Indeed it would appear that the spirit of gambling is becoming almost universal. Such reckless adventure augurs ill for the future prosperity of the nation.”

“De'il a bit of that! It's the best thing that could have happened,” said Davie. “Ye'll no persuade me that the savings o' the country are not better employed in opening up internal communication, whereby trade and commeree will be greatly stimulated, and work and wages be given in the mean time to thousands of strong earles who otherwise wad be sair put about to earn a shilling—not to speak of the encouragement given to men of skill, such as engineers and surveyors --than if they were posed up in the banks at two per cent, or lent out on heritable security. And what do you think it is that has brought a' this siller out o' deposit accounts and hiding-holes, and, for aught I ken, auld wives' stockings, and scattered it broadcast over the face of the land, for the ingathering of men of sense and industry? Just the hope of getting a pre-

mium, or double return, which is at the root of all mercantile enterprise. It's true enough that the railway projectors, for the most part, have little capital o' their ain, but then they sell their shares at a high price to gowks who have the wherewithal and are mair than ordinarily greedy. It's like sinking a shaft for a well; if you gae deep enough, you're sure to find water. Doubtless some day there will come a crash; but for a' that the movement's in the right direction."

"Well; but what occasioned your departure from Selkirk?"

"Why, ye see the railways multiplied sae fast—that is, in the way of prospectuses—that it wasna easy to find engineers; and when the engineers were gotten, there was an unco dearth o' surveyors. I might hae set up as an engineer mysel', for I had mair than ae offer frae the west country, where the folk are just clean mad about new lines; but I had ower little experience, sae I even took a surveying engagement in England; and that's a' my story."

"And how long do you intend to remain in this neighbourhood?"

"Oh, just till I get the survey completed; that will be in two or three days, and then I maun to London. We'll be before Parliament in the spring."

"Ah—then no doubt we shall meet there. But, Davie, I would advise you as a friend to be cautious in your movements. That fellow Stubbs will be on the look-out for you."

"I'm no feared," said Davie. "Man for man, I

reckon mysel' a match for the gleggest keeper that ever trapp'd a founmart ; but there is an unco difference when it's four or six to one. But he and I will not forgather, that ye may be sure of. If I want to take anither bit look at the ground, I'll do it by moonlight ; and I ken a trick that will throw dust in his e'en. For five shillings I can get a chield to fire off a gun on the other side of the property, and I'll wager half a year's salary that for that night I'll no be plagued wi' Mr Stubbs. But here we are at the public road, and you had better gang back to your friend. If I might be sae bold as to advise, maybe the less ye say about me the better."

" Under present circumstances, perhaps that will be the prudent course. But, Davie, I cannot sufficiently admire your discretion. Since you knew me all the while, how was it that you did not appeal to me when you were challenged as a poacher? "

" I trow I had mair sense than to do anything sae doited," replied Davie. " They could do naething to me beyond warning me off the ground, and what wad hae been the use of my mixing you up with my ain professional concerns? Besides, I've seen enough of them to ken that the English gentry have queer notions. They stand upon their rank and pedigree—set them up! maist feck of them canna count beyond three generations—and they maybe might hae jaloused that auld acquaintance wi' a land-louper like me was no just creditable to yoursel'."

" Goodbye then, Davie. We shall meet again, I

trust, soon, when we may have more leisure to converse. However changed your position may be, I observe you have not forgotten the auld Scots tongue."

"Laith wad I be to forget my mither speech," replied Davie; "but ye are no to suppose, Mr Norman, that I aye speak as broad as this. I can clip the Queen's English gey and weel when I like to try; but I hae aye fand that naething bombazes a Southron like what they ca' broad Doric, and I trow that this day it has stood me in gude stead. Fareweel, then; and may gude luck attend ye."

So saying, he started at a brisk pace, and I returned towards Wilbury.

CHAPTER XX.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

To retail bygone conversations is necessarily somewhat tedious, though it cannot be avoided without sacrificing much of the dramatic element which gives interest to every narrative. Out of the multitude of words which we hear and utter, an immense mass passes away directly from the memory, leaving no more permanent impression on the mind than the flight of birds through the air, or the casual ripples upon a pool. And yet there are words which, after the expiry of many long years, recur to us as vividly and plainly as when we listened to their utterance—not merely conveying a general sense or meaning, but exact even to the echo of the tone of the voice and the corresponding gesture, though that voice may long ago have been hushed in the silence of the tomb. Nevertheless these constitute rather the exceptions than the rule. In detailing conversations, which is our daily practice, either in writing or in speech, I apprehend that all of us, though perhaps unconsciously, strive after dramatic

effect, giving more pungency to the expressions and point to the repartees than was their due; and, by means of curtailment in one part and of exaggeration in another, arraying our story in such a dress as may recommend it to the acceptance of our audience. For my own part, I have no faith in the accuracy of reported conversations, even when the report is given from the witness-box, and attested by the solemnity of an oath. Every man is, more or less, an adept in the art of framing a story. Give him the rude material, and the instinct of imagination immediately prompts him to construct. Furnish him with the bare outline, and he cannot resist the temptation to put in colour. Do you think, reader, that one-third, ay, or one-tenth, of those brilliant sayings, happy *mots*, and clever retorts, which pass current in society as the spontaneous and extempore utterances of the leading wits of the town, were really flashes of inspiration? If that is your opinion, pardon me for assuring you that you are utterly wrong. By far the greater portion of them are the products of the hammer and the file. They have been worked into shape and prepared at the cost of no inconsiderable labour. They differ as much in appearance from what was their original form, as the new-coined sovereign does from the lump of Californian ore.

Thrice happy is the professed romancer who is under no restraint whatever! He is the uncontrolled fashioner of his characters, the framer of his puppets, whom he galvanises into mimic life, arranges them in

artistic groups, puts whatsoever language he pleases into their mouths, and whisks them when convenient from the stage, without being amenable to any law beyond that of the remotest credibility. Nay, it is even not necessary for our enjoyment that we should believe in the foregone reality of any part of his exhibition. Let him present us with marvels transcending all known feats of jugglery, and, so that we are amused, we shall not examine too curiously into the secret of his sleight of hand. "Tell us a story!" say the Arabs to the fabulist of their tribe; and straightway he produces for their delectation Antar rending lions in twain, makes the dim forms of the genii float through the dusky air, conjures up from the arid sands the likeness of imperial Bagdad, and changes the star-light glimmering on the solitary well, into the lustre of a thousand lamps wavering on the current of the Tigris.

Not so the poor autobiographer, whose fancy, even though it may rebel against such bondage, must be kept in check—who is not answerable for the form or even the motions of the characters which he presents—whose plot is given to him under the inexorable condition that he shall not alter or innovate. For he is, to all intents and purposes, an historian, though his history may only relate to the events of private life; and from him is expected a rigorous adherence to fact which the romancer laughs to scorn. He has placed himself from the outset in this difficult position, that he asks for implicit belief; therefore, whatever be the

sacrifice of interest, he must conduct his narrative so as to avoid all suspicion that he is mingling the fictitious with the real, or drawing upon his imagination to supply the ever-recurring deficiencies of actual circumstance. In short, whatever may be his wish, he cannot always be artistical, and he must often appear incoherent. Cause and effect are not within his power; he is no more justified in tampering with the main incidents of his story, than the chronicler would be if he reared up fictitious dynasties, assigned victories to the vanquished, or set chronology at defiance by representing the heroes of one age as living and acting in another.

Therefore, dear reader, if I should sometimes be tedious, as must, I fear, be the case, I pray you to be merciful in your judgment, and to give due consideration to the alleviating circumstances. Despise me not because I refrain from presenting you with wonders, and accost you rather in the tone of every-day conversation than in the more fascinating melo-dramatic style which commands the applause and rivets the attention of the galleries. Be not wroth because my characters are not of preternatural stature, or perpetually labouring under the excitement of violent passion, or giving utterance to rhapsodical sentiments, or indulging in apostrophe and anithesis. I cannot say with bully Bottom, "My chief humour is for a tyrant; I could play Ereles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split." I am sure you would not regard your own friends one whit more favourably—nay,

you would esteem them less—if, instead of expressing themselves in the common parlance of ladies and gentlemen, or in accordance with their calling and education, they were to adopt a strain somewhat akin to blank verse, request you to look at their writhing hearts, and demand your sympathy for their woes. Please, then, to be equally indulgent to those friends whom I have presented, and may yet present to you ; and do not expect them to be either outrageously sentimental or irresistibly humorous, seeing that they are not fictitious, but component parts of that great circle of society in which we all live, and move, and have our being.

It was now Christmas eve, the period which, of all others, recommends itself most dearly to the Christian heart ; for the vigil and the feast do so combine in unison and mystic meaning that we can make no separation of their terms. It is not so with the coming in of the New Year ; for I imagine that very few thoughtful persons, setting aside the reckless and the profane, can have failed to experience a thrill of awe and an unwonted seriousness of mood, as they listen to the slow and measured ticking of the clock, or mark the inexorable progress of the index as it moves towards the point when the knell of the old year must be tolled. The point is reached at last, and the heavy strokes vibrate over the city ; and a shout of exultation arises in the streets, as if the multitude rejoiced to be assured that they had gone so far on their passage to eternity, and were glad to abandon for ever the memory of their

earlier days! "Hail to the New Year—may it be luckier than the last!" Is that jubilee-cry suited to the occasion? Should we treat so lightly that measured portion of our life which has gone to swell the stupendous chronicle of the human race, on the first page of which the words are written, that God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul? Are years but as water, that we should rejoice to see them spilled, disregarding the use we have made of the time so mercifully vouchsafed to us? Why, even the heathen poet could teach us better; for his cry,

"O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos,"

is a wail of lamentation for the neglected past, albeit he never had a glimpse of the bright and morning star. The dying saint, the holy sufferer, the aged pilgrim, who can regard death but as a passage to life immortal and eternal rest, might indeed hail the sounds which mark the passage of a year as an audible token of their approaching joy; but that those who cling to life for its sensualities, its vanities, and its excitements, should shout, and cheer, and pass the wine-cup from hand to hand, so soon as they hear the warning that they are drawing nigher to their graves, puzzles my apprehension, and often leads me to suspect that, despite of evangelical missionary reports, there is a vast deal of absolute heathenism among us, over which the Calvinistic gown has been somewhat mal-adroitly thrown.

But no sad thoughts, no melancholy reflections, beset

us upon Christmas eve. Then we are awaiting the advent of that hallowed hour which brought joy and redemption to the fallen race of Adam; and our thoughts wander back to the old, old time when the shepherds in the fields of Palestine were keeping watch over their flocks by night, and gazing on the glory of the stars, unwitting of the greater glory that was to appear. Deep silence there was, and a solemn hush, as if all nature held its breath. The wind stirred not; no sound of waters was heard; no cry of beast came afar from the mountain-clefts; no scream of night-bird disturbed the stillness of the air,—when suddenly a light, brighter than the sun at mid-day, shone around, and the angel of the Lord stood before these shepherds, and told them the good tidings of great joy which should be to all people; and then arose such a symphony as never before or since has vibrated on mortal ears—the choral song of a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.” On that night too, in far Chaldea, the Magi saw the wondrous star, and followed it; and it went before them as a guide till it rested above the lowly shed at Bethlehem, where the Babe was lying in a manger; and the wise men of the East fell down, and worshipped him, and gave him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. Is it superstition that makes us deem that season the most blessed of the year—that bids us banish for a time all idle thoughts, and vain ambitions, and devouring cares, and celebrate in singleness of heart the

coming of the Saviour of the world? Surely not! It is a barren and a cheerless faith that recognises no anniversaries, that rejects observances, and would ruthlessly stifle the impulses of the grateful heart. There can be no superstition in that which is prompted by piety and love, and which wars not against the letter of our creed. Can it, indeed, be averred that men are so prone to worship and adore, so pure of heart, so blameless in thought and deed, so constantly and deeply thankful for the vast measure of mercy they have received, that they should pass over the nativity of our Lord with less reverence than we all unite in giving to the birthday of an earthly potentate?

But while I say this, which I do in all gravity and seriousness, let it not be supposed that I am advocating that reckless jollity, that hilarious mirth, and capricious indulgence, which rob Christmas of its sacred character, and debase it into a saturnalian orgy. It is good that on such a day men should meet together as friend with friend or brother with brother; that they should hold a feast, and eat their meat, as the first believers did, with gladness and singleness of heart; but it is not good to forget the true meaning of the festival, and encourage such boisterous wassail as would have suited the hall of Herod. Not altogether untrue or without foundation are the remarks of a recent writer, who says, that though we have retained Christmas in England, it is observed less as a solemn feast than as a season for excessive eating; and I must needs allow that modern literature and art have favour-

ed such heinous desecration. Do but look at the popular woodcuts, some of them exhibiting no common degree of talent, and you will find almost invariably that the holy season is typified by the figure of an aged glutton—potbellied, pimped, and blear-eyed—with a goblet in one hand and a spoon in the other, like an alderman preparing for an immediate assault upon a smoking tureen of calipash. Round him are grouped disreputable nymphs in short petticoats squeezing bunches of grapes, and ambling satyrs leering at firkins, and pantomimic clowns—their faces bedaubed with ochre and their tongues lolling from their mouths. Then, by way of marginal decoration, you have a border of chines of beef, and turkeys, and pheasants, and boar-heads, and mince-pies, and spheres of plum-pudding, and reeking bowls of punch, the mere sight of which is enough to beget dyspepsia in any well-regulated stomach; and the practical lesson to be derived from all this is, that it is your bounden duty to eat, drink, and be jolly—yea, even to repletion—for “Christmas comes but once a-year!” And then we are expected to read a vast deal about hysterical chuckling, and poking of the ribs, and rubbing of the elbow and facetious slapping of the back; and good fairies administer plumcake, whereas rhubarb would be more german to the matter; and things are so arranged that everybody in the end gets a hearty dinner and plenty of hot drink, and goes merrily down the country-dance. Darby is betrothed to Joan; the old stingy uncle agrees to untie his purse-strings; philanthropy

is identified with cramming ; and the devotional heart is cheered with the contemplation of pickled oysters.

William Shakespeare—most genial of men and best of England's worthies !—these were not your thoughts when you wrote—

“ Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long ;
And then they say, no spirit dares stir abroad.
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm ;
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.”

God rest thee, gentle Will ! Thou hadst more real religion in thy little finger than could be gathered from the heart of many a tonsured or a surpliced priest.

It was the custom at Wilbury to observe the rites of Christmas with all due solemnity, though with little ostentation. There was no Christmas-tree, with its tiny candles and sparkling gifts, for there were no children in the house ; but the rooms were duly decked with the holly and mistletoe, that strange Druidic emblem of the long-forgotten past. On the eve the dinner-party broke up early, and we all assembled in the drawing-room to await the coming of the festival. The discourse was of a graver character than usual ; even the Misses Carrington seemed to feel the influence of the time, and forbore from exerting their fascinations further than by a casual glance directed towards the gentlemen. Stately Lady Lorimer tried hard to lay aside her pretensions ; and, to my surprise, the austere Miss Bootle became absorbed in the perusal of

The Christian Year. Apart from the others sat Amy Stanhope and Mary Beaton in quiet earnest conversation ; not unwatched, you may be sure, by some of us who were present, but altogether wrapped in those sweet confidences of their own.

And here I may just as well confess the fact that, though only four days had elapsed since my arrival at Wilbury Hall, I was already as deeply in love with Mary Beaton as though I had known her all my life. No young man, unless he is cold as a tortoise, or unimpressible as an armadillo, arrives at the years of discretion, without having felt, many times, the magnetic influence of sparkling eyes, or that gush of warm feeling which, as I am given to understand, is now denominated "spooniness," but which, while it lasts, is beyond all question genuine and sincere ! The Greeks, who had a fine turn for the tender passion, created two Cupids, Eros and Anteros, to each of whom they assigned a different function ; but the musty commentators, from Cicero downwards—what could Cicero know of the matter more than the Chancellors Eldon or Campbell ?—have differed in their interpretation as to what the functions were, and merely present to us two naked children wrestling for the cestus of Cytherea. Let us take a rational view, and one which is fortified by experience, and believe that Eros is the wandering and erratic spirit—the unscrupulous bird-bolter—the Puck and Robin Goodfellow of love, who plants his shafts with joyous recklessness, regarding every bosom as his lawful aim—the

mad boy who levels ranks, confounds anticipation, has no respect for persons, and is never so gleeful as when he can succeed in squeezing the juice of the delusive herb into the eye for which it was not intended. And Eros is very potent. He makes early marriages; neither time nor circumstances nor disposition cohering. He has fairy ointment, warranted to be effectual but a brief space beyond the honeymoon, which will produce illusions strong as reality; and if you allow him to touch you with that salve, you become his victim. Very dangerous indeed is that same Eros! He can make a mere village maiden—a mixture of the comely and the clumsy—a Cicely whose highest acquired accomplishment is but the frothing of a syllabub—appear to the sentimental youth of twenty as lovely and enchanting a nymph as ever tripped through the Arcadian forests, or moved in the train of Dian when she hunted on the slopes of Latmos. He it is who caters matrimonially for the daughters of keepers of lodging-houses, for artful governesses, spicy grissettes, and fascinating frequenters of Cremorne; nor does he confine his practice exclusively to the young, for many an elderly gentleman, wearied of lonely existence, has been prompted by that same Eros to commit the inexpiable folly of elevating the house-keeper from the pickling-room to supreme dominion in the parlour.

Anteros again is a much more staid, circumspect, and intelligent Cupid, who seldom takes deliberate aim at any one before he or she has at least attained to the years of discretion. He is no friend to rash, inconsi-

derate, or ill-assorted matches. He considers it his duty not only to promote marriages, but to take care that such unions shall be happy; and he is so far from practising illusions that he exerts himself strenuously to dispel them. You are tolerably safe with him, for he is no squanderer of his ammunition, and never shoots without deliberate purpose. A first-rate marksman, notwithstanding, is he. The shafts of Eros sometimes glance aside, or inflict slight temporary flesh-wounds, from which you soon recover without experiencing much inconvenience; but when Anteros does let an arrow fly, you may be sure it goes right into the heart.

I deny not that I, like most of my neighbours, had more than once served as a target for Eros; and one of his shafts, which he was pleased to launch at me in Germany, had a decided barb, and was somewhat difficult of extrication. However, I did my best, and used some precaution to baffle the attacks of the pestilent little villain, who has a great antipathy to books which are not of the Ovidian standard, and will retreat in utter discomfiture, as the devil did from Luther, if you shy an ink-horn at his head. And I succeeded so far, that, after a time, he assailed me only with blunted arrows—mere rib-admonishers, which were hardly effectual for a bruise. But at last Anteros found me; and, contrary to his usual habit, without premonition, took aim at my bosom, and shot within the garland as deftly as William of Cloudeslee.

This may, for anything I know, be deemed a fan-

tastic way of admitting that I was seriously in love ; but do you, my brave young reader, who may think it so, try your own hand at an amatory confession. Of course, if I were writing about Launcelot and Guinever, or Tristram and Isolde, or Henry and the Fair Rosamond, I could give you most beautiful love-scenes, more passionate than the death-songs of a thousand swans. But a man naturally shrinks from talking about his own love-passages and secret feelings. It is a kind of self-anatomy, the idea of which is absolutely abhorrent. No surgeon, however fond he may be of his profession, would like to operate upon himself, and still less to deliver on such an occasion a demonstrative lecture. Therefore I crave, or rather claim, to be excused from entering into particulars, and stand, now and hereafter, on my undoubted privilege of concealing from you what I, Norman Sinclair, said, and what answer I received. Heaven help us ! have we come to that pass that every unfortunate fellow who wields a pen must make a clean breast of it to the public ?

As, however, I have admitted the fact of my attraction or enthrallment, I may perhaps be allowed to say that, if there was any element of hope at all in my dreams, it was of the very faintest character. I know it has been maintained that love cannot exist without hope, but that I hold to be a fallacy. Love is beyond control. The page may love the princess ; but as rationally may he expect a star from heaven to drop as a diamond into his extended hand, as to win the object of his adoration. Sir Walter Scott, in his most

excellent romance of *Quentin Durward*, has thought fit to append a sort of indirect apology for making his penniless hero win the hand of the Countess Isabelle of Croye. The apology was needless as applied to the age which he was illustrating, but, in regard to that in which we live, it is of extreme significance. For, to speak quite plainly and without disguise, money is all in all, when matrimony comes on the tapis. You are not estimated according to your wit, intellect, learning, or even reputation—the real point to be ascertained is your rental, or your balance with your banker. I will not go the length of saying that plausible exceptions of future professional success may not sometimes be accepted in lieu of realised fortune ; but that is not often the case when girls who are heiresses in anticipation are concerned. “I can give my daughter at the least eighty thousand pounds,” says the eminent drysalter, who began life by shifting shutters, “and if that won’t get her an Irish Peer, at all events it’s a high enough price for a Baronet.” Poor girl! she would be much happier if allowed to marry within her own sphere. Lord Blarney more or Sir Sidney Raikes, whichever of them may be preferred, will simply squander her money, regarding her all the while with as perfect indifference as if she were the sack that contained the bullion. But fathers, ay, and mothers too, when preparing their matrimonial estimates, too often dismiss, as unworthy of consideration, the pure question of happiness. They are resolved to have what they call value for their money, the value

being, for the most part, some slight social elevation. If you have nothing of this kind to offer, and are, moreover, the reverse of wealthy, you had better keep out of the way of heiresses. The odds are that they will have nothing to say to you ; and even were they favourably inclined, you are certain to fall before the discharge of the parental battery.

I knew perfectly well that in falling in love with Miss Beaton I was giving way to a sentiment that in all probability would cause me much disquiet. My excuse is that I could not help it. I was, to speak the honest truth, entirely fascinated by this the loveliest, sweetest, and gentlest lady I had ever seen, and I had no more the power of dismissing her image from my mind, than the sick man has of conjuring away the phantoms which seem to hover around his couch. But this much I was resolved on, that, whatever my feelings might be, I should so restrain them as to create no suspicion in the minds of others that I had even entertained a thought which, considering my position, would justly have been deemed presumptuous.

But I must back to the drawing-room at Wilbury. The gentlemen, I must acknowledge, seemed somewhat at a loss for occupation ; for, however orthodox men may be, nothing makes them more fidgety than the expectation of some devotional ceremony, they not knowing what to do in the interim. Sir John Hawkins, who was the reverse of imaginative, indulged in various yawns ; while Lumley, in a sudden fit of enthusiasm for the cause of education, busied himself in teaching

Amy Stanhope's pet spaniel to sit upright, and toss biscuit from its nose. For my own part, I gradually lapsed into a reverie, of a nature half melancholy, half pleasant; for Christmas had hitherto been for me rather a name than a realised festival, so entirely had I been cut off from the enjoyment of the social circle. It appeared to me like a dream that I, the helpless orphan who had found shelter in a cottage—the penniless lad, who, after my poor uncle's death, had been forced into an early struggle with the world—the erratic student, who could not so much as say what was his proper home,—should now be residing in a splendid English mansion, and mingling on terms of equality with those who were my superiors in rank and fortune. True, I might say with Bassanio that “I was a gentleman;” but, beyond that threadbare boast, common to so many of my countrymen, I had no recommendation. Could I then feel otherwise, especially at such a season as this, than profoundly grateful to the Almighty for His care and protection, and for the fulfilment of the promise that He will be the Father of the fatherless? Ah, no! If ingratitude between man and man is odious, how immeasurably more heinous is the sin if we take the bounties of God without yielding some acknowledgment, however imperfect it may be!

And so the night wore on, quietly, as the stars moved in the heaven; quietly, as became Christian people observing such a vigil, though their mode of observing it, and the tenor of their thoughts, differed, as must always be the case, according to their peculiar

temperament. At length, however, at a signal from Mr Stanhope, we all adjourned to the library, where the servants were assembled, and Dr Wayles read the evening service.

Scarcely had he ended when the clock struck the hour of the Nativity, and the children from the parish-school, who had been brought into the hall, sung the following old English carol :—

“As Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing,
This night shall be born
Our heavenly King.

He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox’s stall.

He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But all in fair linen
As were babies all.

He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle
That rocks on the mould.”

Then with hearty congratulations, in which all unfeignedly joined—for I am quite certain that the most listless and volatile of the party were impressed with the solemnity of the occasion—we parted for the night.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN OLEAGINOUS INTERVIEW.

“KEEP moving on!” It is an excellent piece of advice, even when it proceeds from the lips of a policeman ; and by writers of every kind of narrative it ought especially to be borne in mind. For we are beset by many temptations to dawdle and dilate ; we are apt to become circumstantial regarding details of no real value or import ; and, like children in pursuit of butterflies, to deviate from the beaten track in chase of some aerial apparition.

I shall therefore say nothing more in reference to what occurred during my brief stay at Wilbury Hall, repressing a certain inclination which I feel to describe the Christmas festivities ; but shall again transport myself to London, where I took apartments in Jermyn Street, much more comfortable and creditable than those which I had hitherto occupied by kind permission of Mrs Lewson. Carlton remained in the country, intending, as I sincerely hoped, to improve the occasion, and to get rid of those extraordinary crotchets which

were the sole obstacle to his wishes. I will not deny that, when I thought over our conversation at Wilbury, I felt utterly amazed that a man otherwise so rational could allow himself to be haunted by such chimeras, nor that I sometimes repined, now that I had seen Mary Beaton, that I had not a fortune like that of Carlton to justify the prosecution of my suit. Had it been so, assuredly no vain scruples would have stood in my way. But I soon checked that weakness; for the man who indulges in repining at his lot is already half a craven, and will flinch from the approaching battle.

I should note, however, that before I left Wilbury, Sir George Smoothly took occasion to renew his proffers of service; and was so bland and conciliatory in his manner, that, in spite of myself, a certain prejudice which I had contracted against him gave way; and I began to think that I had done injustice to a very amiable and friendly gentleman. Of all baits to angle with, benevolence is the most sure and deadly! How can you distrust the individual whose eye, as he regards you, beams with sympathy, who listens with so much patience and interest to your aspirations, and who occasionally interjects a sigh, as if regretful that the days when he too was possessed by youthful enthusiasm had departed? Besides this, it was difficult to conceive what motive Sir George could have in paying me such marked attention, beyond that disinterested wish to help me forward, which he did not hesitate to express. I could be of no use to him—of that I was thoroughly convinced; and though I knew then, not quite so well

as I do now, that there is a sort of men who make it their invariable policy to be lavish in professions of good-will alike to high and low, and find their advantage in doing so, still it appeared to me incredible that he would have renewed the subject had he not been thoroughly sincere. I was by this time tolerably well aware of his real standing and position. He was a new baronet, of mercantile family and moderate fortune, who, having been able, through local connection, to secure the representation of a petty borough, had attached himself to the Conservative party, was never absent from divisions, served on all manner of committees, made himself generally useful, and never presumed to speak in debate, unless when specially requested to do so at times when the Treasury benches were thin (that is, at the period of the day when good men are wont to dine); and then, if necessary, he would prose away for half an hour, fluently enough, in order to keep the parliamentary machine from coming to an absolute stoppage. A man so useful to his party, and so ready to obey the mandates of the ministerial whipper-in, was entitled to expect some tangible recognition of his services; and he was not disappointed. He was promoted to office and salary; performed his duties, such as they were, with much blandness and assiduity; but still continued to fag in the House with as much perseverance as before. In public life, plausible mediocrity is far more likely to succeed than real talent. From entire subservience to the whip, Sir George Smoothly progressed to personal toadyism, of the Leader

of the House. He threw his homage into the form of absolute worship. According to his declared opinion, the seven sages of Greece, stewed down together in Æson's chaldron, would not have reproduced so perfect an incarnation of wisdom and sagacity as the Premier. He was to be regarded less as a man, than as an incarnation or embodiment of the divine essence of intellect ; and it was remarked that, when cheering the speeches of his chief, Sir George Smoothly intoned his "hear, hear!" very much as a pious Catholic might do his response in the adoration of Madonna. Now, however mentally great a man may be—however religiously and conscientiously he may try to throw off private preferences while labouring for the public good—this kind of adulation will always work upon him. It cannot be otherwise, because he does not see the heart. In the full-flowing tide of success he anticipates no reaction ; and he is always ready to believe that the homage which is only paid him by reason of his singular success, and through the belief that it will be permanent, arises from personal attachment, and, as such, will continue to be rendered notwithstanding political changes. Now, without denying the existence of such attachments, noble and honourable alike to the leader and the follower, I must needs record my opinion that such instances are rare, at least compared with the multitude of desertions that follow upon waning popularity. Few are eager to grasp the hand that has no longer the power of dispensing gifts ; few will stand by the deposed chieftain rather than offer their allegiance to his

successful rival. Statesmen, however, do not think of this; they are gratified by the show of devotion, and very naturally bestow their smiles and their favours upon those who are the most consummate proficient in the art of flattery. And I question whether the courts of Dionysius or of Canute contained a more skilful adept than Sir George Smoothly. He never presumed upon recognition; he never for a moment forgot his place. It was impossible to spoil him. Other men, if honoured by the notice of the Minister so marked that it might almost have been construed into confidence, would have borne their heads more high in consequence, and have boasted of their influence and their power. Not so Smoothly. *Nobis sit prima virtus humilitas* might have been his motto, so affable was his deportment, so meekly did he bear himself towards all. Hence he became a trusted man, an indispensable member of the Government; and though occupying but a subordinate position, it was generally believed that his good word would be as effectual with those in high places as the more direct recommendation of many who ranked above him as politicians.

What wonder then if I felt gratified by the attention shown to me by a personage so influential, and gave a heedful ear to the suggestions that flowed from his experienced lips? He briefly referred to our former conversation when we first met on the Rhine, inquired into the nature of my subsequent studies and avocations; was pleased to express much satisfaction at learning that I had directed my attention somewhat to questions of a

public nature; and hinted that he had great hopes very soon of being able to procure for me some considerable government appointment.

“You must understand, however, my dear Mr Sinclair,” he said, “that nothing can be done until after the meeting of Parliament. I happen to know that Ministers at present are more than usually embarrassed by a vast number of applications from quarters which they dare not neglect. It is a bad system, I admit, but I fear that it is one inseparable from constitutional government. My own influence is very small—so small, indeed, that I cannot use it except in favour of some one who would be of material service to our party. I shall ever consider myself fortunate in having met with you; because sterling talent, combined with sound judgment and steady business habits, is a commodity which we rarely meet with, and greatly desiderate. I was, I assure you, very much impressed by what fell from you at our first casual meeting—so much so, that I took occasion (I tell you this, of course, in the strictest confidence) to mention your name to the Premier, whom I have been visiting at his country-seat. The claims of genius, especially when it is of an available kind, have never been disregarded by that eminent and benevolent man. He was very particular in his inquiries, and then said, ‘Well, Smoothly; by your account this young gentleman should not be lost sight of. If he had any parliamentary connection, I should not hesitate for a moment, on your recommendation, to engage him in the

public service. But no one knows better than yourself that we are forced to be most cautious in the exercise of our patronage ; and I would not be justified in elevating this gentleman over the heads of other public servants, unless I had substantial and tangible proof that he possesses those high abilities for which you give him credit. Furnish me with such proof, and you may rely upon it that his claims shall not be overlooked.' These were his precise words ; and I need hardly say that you ought to consider them as most encouraging."

"My dear Sir George !" I replied, in no little confusion, for the announcement that my name had been already mentioned to so exalted a personage as the Premier quite took away my breath, "how shall I ever thank you sufficiently for such unmerited kindness?"

"I deserve no thanks, my dear young friend, for doing what I consider to be quite as much an act of public duty, as a token of the personal interest which I feel towards yourself. Your promotion, therefore, depends entirely upon your own exertions ; but you have this immense advantage over others, that the gate stands open for your entrance."

All this was vastly gratifying, and much more than I could have expected or hoped for. Still it was not very explicit. I had a distinct assurance that by doing something or other I should receive promotion, but I had not the remotest idea what sort of work was expected from me. I was, like Michael Scott's familiar spirit, ready enough to execute any task that might be

assigned to me, or, at all events, to make the essay ; but I stood utterly in need of suggestion. I did not know how or with what I should begin.

Sir George Smoothly no doubt divined my thoughts—indeed, I imagine that he made a pause in the conversation on purpose that this difficulty should present itself to my mind. In diplomacy the advantage always remains with that party who can concuss or persuade the other into asking advice ; and the honourable baronet was better versed in diplomacy than many who have been bred to it as a profession. I therefore begged him to add to his other favours by indicating the course which I ought to pursue.

“I have already considered that matter very seriously,” replied Sir George ; “and although you could doubtless furnish sufficient proof of your literary ability by pointing to articles and other things which you may have written, I am afraid that such would not be deemed the most acceptable kind of testimonial. The fact is, that my illustrious friend did not attain to his present exalted position without having been made the subject of many attacks—some of them most flagrant and injurious—from organs of public opinion which professed to advocate the cause of the Conservative party. Of late there are certain symptoms which make me apprehensive that such unworthy conduct may be renewed ; for we are molested by some malcontents, for the most part young and inexperienced men, who are not satisfied with the conciliatory policy of our great leader, and affect to distrust his sincerity. Now

it is a marked peculiarity of that distinguished man—I dare not call it a weakness—that he is very sensitive to such attacks ; and their former frequency has engendered in his mind a sort of dislike to political writers in general. It has even been observed, that when he does extend his notice to persons of that class, it is rather to those who have been his direct political opponents than to such as are known to maintain Conservative opinions.”

“Surely,” said I, “that cannot be a wise policy. It must be conceded that the press exercises an enormous power—whether judiciously or not, in certain cases, may be a disputed question. But how can a Minister expect active support from the press if he neglects to conciliate those who are its controllers? I have reason to believe that complaints, founded upon this, are very general ; and that comparisons highly unfavourable to the Minister have been drawn between the scurvy treatment which Conservative writers receive at the hands of their party-chiefs, and the marked attention and encouragement which are given to literary men by the heads of the Whig alliance.”

“What you say is no doubt quite true,” replied Sir George. “I have always held that we should encourage literary men. But that does not fall within my department ; and it must be confessed that my illustrious friend has ere now been so bitterly reviled by Tory writers, that he can hardly be expected to have any decided leaning in their favour.”

“That may be. Still it is strange that, while syste-

matically overlooking his supporters, he should give any countenance to avowed opponents."

"Ah! you don't know what he has endured. His is a most sensitive nature. He resembles the gladiator who rejoices to meet a foe armed at all points in the arena, but shrinks with apprehension from the threatened sting of a wasp. Unrivalled in debate, he is strangely susceptible to ridicule; and if he does bestow some little attention upon men who, in this age of whim and oddity, can provoke the ready laugh, that must be regarded solely in the light of a wise precaution. But I would not have you identify yourself too much, at least for the present, with the literary profession. That is not the road by which, according to my view, you will attain your object."

"Then, I fear, mine is a hopeless case; for I can think of no other way."

"My dear young friend, you do yourself vast injustice," said Sir George, with one of his very blandest smiles. "Be ruled by me. It is one of the few privileges of age that it can appeal to experience, and guide the young; and though I am not a very old man" (he was sixty-eight if he was a day, though as well preserved as turtle in a tin canister), "I have seen much of the world and its ways, and I know precisely what is required from a young political aspirant. From what you have already told me I gather that you have some practical knowledge of the law of Scotland, which differs in some important respects from that of England. Am I not right in that conjecture?"

“The devil fetch you for an old sneek-drawer !” thought I, mentally recurring to the vernacular. “What, in the name of the collective College of Justice, can have put that notion into your head ?” Practical knowledge ! Of course I had some practical knowledge. No lad who had spent six years in the office of Messrs Meiklecry, Littlewoo, and Shearaway could fail to acquire some smattering of legal lore, and I had not been an idle nor unobservant workman. I was tolerably well conversant with the principles of Scottish law, but I never had been taught to apply them. Howbeit, it was not for me to start a difficulty before I thoroughly understood the drift of the question ; so I replied that I certainly had received the benefit of a legal education, though circumstances had induced me to relinquish the law as a profession.

“Then you are just the very man to suit my purpose,” said Sir George. “A professional lawyer is so accustomed to the use of technicalities, that it is very difficult for us of the laity to understand his meaning. What I want is a gentleman of high intelligence, who, knowing the law, can explain its bearing in intelligible language. It is with extreme gratification that I am able to announce to you that your previous acquirements may now be employed with direct advantage to the State, and, I need not add, for your own interest and advancement.”

“Well,” thought I, “if that should prove to be the case, I may indeed be thankful to Providence and Mr Shearaway for having promoted me to the occupancy of a three-legged stool !”

“The circumstances,” continued Sir George, “are these. I may mention, but in the strictest confidence, that it is proposed, in the course of the ensuing session, to introduce a new Poor-law Act for Scotland. This has been urged upon the Ministry by several influential English members of Parliament, who have paid flying visits to the Highlands for a week or so during the recess, and have been much shocked by the squalid appearance of the inhabitants. You are aware that the tendency of recent legislation is towards uniformity and centralisation ; the object being that pauperism, wherever it exists, shall be dealt with equally and impartially. There can be no reason—so at least many of our English friends, whose votes we must conciliate, maintain—that gigantic poor-houses, like those of Kent and Middlesex, should not be established in such regions as Skye, Uist, and Zetland, at the expense of the proprietors of the soil. In fact, they maintain that each island, having a certain amount of population, should be provided with an independent Bastille. The question being still open, I reserve my individual view ; but this much I may tell you, that a very eminent English county member, who travelled for no less than four days in the West Highlands, has threatened, if the Ministry will do nothing, to make this a critical question ; and it is more than probable that he would engage the support of all sections of the Opposition. I was privileged to be present at an interview with the Premier when he stated his case, which assuredly appeared to be a strong one ; though, owing to his ignor-

ance of the language of the inhabitants, he was unable to say whether they complained or not of the existing system of relief. But the negligence of their raiment, and their eager way of demanding small coin for the purchase of tobacco, appeared to him decisive proofs of their miserable condition, and of the necessity for its amendment; and therefore the Ministry, in order to avoid party dissension, have given directions for the preparation of a general Poor-law measure."

"Such a measure," said I, "may possibly be required; for it is undoubtedly the fact that, in the remoter districts, the people are very poor, and the means of employment are limited. Some may think, and do think, that the best mode of preventing pauperism is to develop the resources of the country; but on that point I venture no opinion. I must say, however, that it is scarcely complimentary to Scotland that the representations of a bull-headed southern squire, who knows nothing whatever of the people, should be made the pretext for legislation on a matter of such extreme importance."

"There, now, you are becoming excited—the very worst thing that can happen to a man who aspires to enter into public life! Shun excitement, my dear young friend; it throws one entirely off his guard. I have not given way to excitement once during the last thirty years."

"What a precious cold-blooded snail you must be!" was my complimentary thought; but I simply answered with a bow.

“But to resume,” said Sir George Smoothly. “We anticipate, of course, that there may be some opposition to the measure, especially as regards details; for even among our nominal supporters there are some who will not accept the schemes of the Cabinet with that entire acquiescence and heartiness which the theory of our Constitution demands. Acquiescence, my dear young friend—I speak from long experience—is the principle which regulates the Treasury. The matter, therefore, stands thus. The debate will be chiefly conducted by the Scotch members; nevertheless it has been deemed advisable that some one of the ministerial party, unconnected with the North, should be thoroughly prepared on the subject; and I, though always reluctant to put myself forward, have been requested to undertake that duty.”

“So! that is the way in which our affairs are managed!” thought I. “A very useful adviser you will prove, old gentleman, on a matter of which you are profoundly ignorant!”

“My opportunities of acquiring information being but limited,” continued Sir George, “and my time being otherwise fully occupied, it is necessary that I should have the assistance of some qualified person to frame, in clear and precise language, a statement of the law as presently administered, along with a tabular view of the parishes in Scotland, their estimated rental, and the amount of the funds which are available for the maintenance of the poor. It would also be desirable that to such a document should be appended any practical suggestions which may occur to the writer, all

which will, most assuredly, be carefully and anxiously considered. The paper will be submitted to the Premier; and, if approved of, will be regarded as the highest possible certificate of merit. Such is the task, my young friend, which I assign to you, in the full belief that you will apply your whole energies and unremitting attention to its performance."

"But, sir," said I, aghast at the proposal, "this is an undertaking utterly beyond my powers and ability!"

"You will permit me to be the judge of that," replied Sir George, with a smile ineffably seraphic. "I cannot allow your modesty, which, however, is a rare and commendable quality, to stand in the way of your promotion. Young men, I am well aware, are, through inexperience, apt at first to shrink from the responsibility of such labours; but that is mere nervous diffidence, which will disappear as soon as you set to work in earnest. I have some parliamentary papers and returns which you may find of material assistance, and these I shall forward to your address."

"Really, Sir George, I do not see how I possibly can undertake this. I am not ashamed to own that my circumstances are such as to force me to economise my time for the means of livelihood; and if I were to apply myself diligently to such an investigation, I must needs abandon all other engagements."

"Ah now! Believe me, you very much overrate the labour. If you begin to imagine difficulties before they arise, you will never be able to make your way. Think only of the splendid prospect before you, and be resolute."

“But, sir,” said I; “you really ought to apply to some person better qualified than I am, from age and experience, to consider a question involving results of such magnitude! I tell you fairly that I am not competent to grapple with such a subject. It is one upon which men of high attainments have held conflicting views; and it would be utterly presumptuous in me to hazard an opinion in a controversy which has lasted since the Union. Fletcher of Saltoun——”

“Excuse me!” said Sir George Smoothly. “There is no gentleman of that name in the House of Commons.”

“True, sir; but I allude to a man of great historical eminence.”

“Ah! That convinces me that you *have* studied the question very minutely indeed. Do me the favour to jot down his views, in a general way, so far as you can, but embodying a quotation, which, if necessary, I can read to the House. How delighted I am to find that you are truly master of the position, and that your modesty alone stands in your way! You must take courage. State what you think; but think always in accordance with the general tendency of those who require your assistance; and you may be sure that this slight sacrifice of your time will be productive of substantial results hereafter. Adieu, my dear Mr Sinclair! I cannot express the gratification I derive from the thought that I shall be able to advance your interests.”

And so, with an affectionate but somewhat clammy squeeze of the hand, Sir George Smoothly made his exit from the library, where the interview which I have

detailed took place, leaving me in a mood of mind in which it would be difficult to say whether doubt, hope, or vexation predominated.

“Would to heaven,” said I, soliloquising, “that I could fathom that man’s real intentions! He speaks fairly, no doubt of that, and I cannot imagine why he should wish to play me false. Yet, confound it, there is something about him that I don’t like! I half suspect that he is humbugging me. He says that he mentioned my name to the Premier—surely that cannot be a lie? No, no—it would be a shame to think so. No English gentleman would demean himself by such gross deceit! But then, why should he have taken such a fancy to me! He has the character of being a selfish man, yet he acts, or professes to act, most generously in regard to myself. Stop though! Generosity is a wide term; and, after all, what has his anxiety on my behalf, supposing it to be real, cost him? Nothing. And what has he promised? Why, vaguely and inferentially, much; but directly and substantially, nothing. But then I suppose I must consider myself for the present as being simply upon trial. Well—that is not altogether unreasonable. Official employments are not so plentiful that I can expect to be offered one without giving proof of my competency. But to undertake a work like this—why, I never shall be able to go through with it except at the sacrifice of more time than I can well afford. What then? All men must lay their account with making some sacrifices, and this, at any rate, holds out a brilliant prospect. But I wish I could have the benefit of some

sound advice. What if I were to tell Carlton of this interview? But no. I am in a manner pledged to secrecy; besides, Carlton dislikes Sir George Smoothly, and is too much prejudiced to give a fair opinion. Come, let me decide at once. I'll do it! Hard work it must be, but why should I shrink from that? O Mary Beaton! If through labour I could hope to win thee, there is no task so arduous that I would not joyfully undertake!"

With this doughty resolution I returned to London, and did immediately apply myself to the compilation of the required statistics. At first I made but slow progress, for I was forced to read a great deal in order to acquire a competent knowledge of the subject. Gradually, however, I began to feel really interested in the work. Thanks to my business education, I had been early accustomed to grapple with figures, an occupation so distasteful to the majority of mankind, and the glowing schedules rose beneath my hand like magic. What subsequently took place must be recorded in another chapter.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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